Thomas Jamieson

No 14

SCS #1610

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SCS #1610

A PRACTICAL

EXPOSITION

OF THE

CXXX. PSALM.

WHEREIN

The NATURE of the FORGIVENESS of SIN is declared, the TRUTH and REALITY of it asserted;

AND

The CASE of a SOUL distressed with the GUILT of SIN, and relieved by a Discovery of FORGIVENESS with GOD, is at large discoursed.

BY JOHN OWEN, *D. D.*

JOHN v. 39. *Search the Scriptures.*

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MDCCLXXII.

TO THE

READER.

THE enſuing expoſition and diſcourſes are intended for the benefit of thoſe, whoſe ſpiritual ſtate and condition is repreſented in the Pſalm here explained. That theſe are not a few, that they are many; yea, that to ſome part or parts of it, they are all who believe both the ſcriptures and their own experience will bear teſtimony to. Some of them, it may be, will enquire into, and after their own concernments, as they are here declared. To be ſerviceable to their faith, peace, and ſpiritual conſolation, hath been the whole of my deſign. If they meet with any diſcovery of truth, any due application of it to their conſciences, any declaration of the ſenſe and mind of the Holy Ghoſt, in the ſcriptures ſuitable unto their condition and uſeful to their edification, much of my end and purpoſe is obtained. I know ſome there are that diſlike all diſcourſes of this nature, and look upon them with contempt and ſcorn. But why they ſhould do ſo, I know not unleſs the goſpel itſelf, and all the myſteries of it, be folly unto them. *Sin* and *Grace* in their original cauſes, various reſpects,

conſequents, and ends, are the principal ſubjects of the whole ſcripture, of the whole revelation of the will of God to mankind; in theſe do our preſent and eternal concernments ly, and from and by them hath God deſigned the great and everlaſting exaltation of his own glory. Upon theſe do turn all the tranſactions that are between God and the ſouls of men. That it ſhould be an endeavour needleſs, or ſuperfluous, to enquire into the will of God *about*, and our own intereſt in theſe things, who can imagine? Two ways there are whereby this may be done. *Firſt*, Speculatively, by a due inveſtigation of the nature of theſe things, according as their doctrine is declared in the ſcripture. An endeavour, according to the mind of God herein, is juſt and commendable, and comprehenſive of moſt of the chief heads of divinity. But this is not to be engaged in for its own ſake. The knowledge of God and ſpiritual things have this proportion unto practical ſciences, that the end of all its notions and doctrines conſiſts in practice. Wherefore, *Secondly*, theſe things are to be conſidered practically, that is, as the ſouls and conſciences of men are actually concerned in them, and converſant about them. How men contract the guilt of ſin, what ſenſe they have, and ought to have thereof, what danger they are liable unto thereon, what perplexities and diſtreſſes their ſouls and conſciences are reduced to thereby, what courſe they fix upon

pon for their relief, as alſo what is that grace of God whereby alone they may be delivered, wherein it conſiſts, how it was prepared, how purchaſed, how it is propoſed, and how it may be attained; what effects and conſequents a participation of it doth produce, how in theſe things faith and obedience unto God, dependence on him, ſubmiſſion to him, waiting for him, are to be exerciſed, is the principal work that thoſe who are called unto the diſpenſation of the goſpel ought to enquire into themſelves, and to acquaint others withal. In the right and due management of theſe things, whether by writing, or oral inſtruction, with prudence, diligence, and zeal, doth conſiſt their principal uſefulneſs in reference unto the glory of God, and the everlaſting welfare of the ſouls of men: And they are under a great miſtake, who ſuppoſe it an eaſy and a common matter to treat theſe practical things uſually to the edification of them that do believe. Becauſe both the nature of the things themſelves, with the concerns of the ſouls and conſciences of all ſorts of perſons in them, require, that they be handled plainly, and without thoſe intermixtures of ſecular learning, additions of ornaments of ſpeech, which diſcourſes of other natures may, or ought to be compoſed and ſet of withal; ſome judging by mere outward appearances, eſpecially if they be of them from whom the true nature of the things themſelves treated of are hid, are ready to deſpiſe and

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ſcorn the plain management of them, as that which hath nothing of wiſdom or learning accompanying of it, no effects of any commendable ability of mind for which it ſhould be eſteemed. But it is not inexpreſſible how great a miſtake ſuch perſons, through their own darkneſs and ignorance, do labour under. In a right ſpiritual underſtanding, in a due perception and comprehenſion of theſe things, the things of the ſins of men and grace of God, conſiſts the greateſt part of that wiſdom, of that ſoundneſs of mind, of that knowledge rightly ſo called, which the goſpel commands, exhibits, and puts a valuation upon. To reveal and declare them unto others in words of truth and ſoberneſs, fit and meet to expreſs them unto the underſtandings of men opened and enlightned by the ſame Spirit, by whom the things themſelves are originally revealed, to derive ſuch ſacred ſpiritual truths from the word and by a due preparation to communicate and apply them to the ſouls and conſciences of men, contains a principal part of that miniſterial ſkill and ability which are required in the diſpenſers of the goſpel; and wherein a ſevere exerciſe of ſound learning, judment and care neceſſary to be found, and may be fully expreſſed. Into this treaſury towards the ſervice of the houſe of God, it is, that I have caſt my mite in the enſuing expoſition and diſcourſes on the cxxx Pſalm. The deſign of the Holy Ghoſt was therein to expreſs and repreſent in the perſon

ſon and condition of the Pſalmiſt the caſe of a ſoul intangled, and ready to be overwhelmed with the guilt of ſin, relieved by a diſcovery of grace and forgiveneſs in God, with its deportment upon a participation of that relief. After the expoſition of the words of the text, my deſign and endeavour hath been only to enlarge the portraiture here given us in the Pſalm, of a believing ſoul in and under the condition mentioned; to render the lines of it more viſible, and to make the character given in its deſcription more legible; and withal to give unto others, in the like condition with the Pſalmiſt, a light to underſtand and diſcern themſelves in that image and repreſentation, which is here made of them in the perſon of another. To this end have I been forced to enlarge on the two great heads of *Sin* and *Grace;* eſpecially on the latter here called the *forgiveneſs that is with God.* An intereſt herein, a participation hereof, being our principal concernment in this world, and the ſole foundation of all our expectations of a bleſſed portion in that which is to come, it certainly requires the beſt and utmoſt of our endeavours, as to look into the nature, cauſes, and effects of it, ſo eſpecially into the ways and means whereby we may be made partakers of it; and how that participation may be ſecured unto us unto our peace and conſolation; as alſo in that love, that holineſs, that obedience, that fruitfulneſs in good works, which on the account of this

of this grace, God expecteth from us, and requireth at our hands. An explication of these things is that which I have designed to ensue and follow after in these discourses, and that with a constant eye, as on the one hand to the sole rule and standard of truth, the sacred scriptures, especially that part of it which is under peculiar consideration; so on the other to the experience and service unto the edification of them that do believe, whose spiritual benefit and advantage, without any other consideration in the world, is aimed at in the publishing of them.

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THE CONTENTS.

Page

A Paraphraſe on the whole cxxx. Pſalm
General Scope of the whole Pſalm 1

The firſt Verſe Opened. 2

Depths of Trouble on the account of Sin 4
——What thoſe Depths are 5
The Nature and Extent of Supplies of Grace, according to the Covenant 12
The Power of in-dwelling Sin 18
God's Sovereignty in dealing with Believers in their Sins 20
What Sins uſually bring Believers into great ſpiritual Diſtreſſes 21
——Aggravations of theſe Sins 25

The ſecond Verſe Opened. 27

Actings of a Believer under Diſtreſſes from Sin 29
The Ways of relieving Souls in Diſtreſs 30
Earneſtneſs of a diſtreſſed Soul in its Applications unto God 33
Grounds of Earneſtneſs in Applications unto God 36
——Wherein this Earneſtneſs conſiſts 40

The third Verſe Opened. 42

What firſt preſents itſelf to a Soul in Diſtreſs on the account of Sin, opened in four Propoſitions 45
Terror ariſing from a Senſe of the Guilt of Sin 46
God's marking Sin, and Man's Salvation inconſiſtent 50
The Soul's Actings towards a Recovery out of the Depths of Sin 54
Senſe of Sin, wherein it conſiſts 55
Nature and Cauſes of Goſpel-Convictions of Sin 56
Acknowledgment of Sin, the true Nature of it: 1. It muſt be free. 2. It muſt be full. 60

Page

Self-condemnation, wherein it consists: 1. Self-abhorrency. 2. Self-judging 63
Miscarriages in Persons convinced of Sin: 1. Resting in it. 2. Resting upon it. 65

The fourth Verse Opened. 70

Three Observations made from this Verse 76
No approaching unto God without a discovery of Forgiveness 77
Forgiveness a great Mystery 80
Testimony of a natural conscience against the Forgiveness of Sin 81
Testimony of the Law against the Forgiveness of Sin 84
False Presumptions of Forgiveness 88
The true Nature of Gospel-Forgiveness 96
Forgiveness as it relates to the Nature of God 98
——— as it relates to the free Acts of his Will 100
——— as it hath respect to the Blood of Christ 106
——— as it relates to the promise 108
What Faith respects in Forgiveness 110
Forgiveness discovered to Faith alone 112
Reasons thereof ib.
Particular Assurance attainable 119
Duty of Believers, to endeavour after an Assurance of personal Interest in Forgiveness 117
Causes and Effects of Assurance 118
Saving Faith where there is no Assurance 119
Discovery of Forgiveness a great Supportment to Sin-entangled Souls 121
Effects of the Discovery of Forgiveness in God 124
Means whereby a Discovery of Forgiveness yields Supportment 125
Abiding with God, wherein it consisteth 128
Waiting on God from a Discovery of Forgiveness 130
Discovery of Forgiveness prepares the Soul to receive it 132
Vain pretences of Faith discovered 134
Essential properties of God's Nature, how made known 136
Free Acts of God's Will, how they are made known 137
Forgiveness not revealed by the Work of Providence about the first Sin 140
Forgiveness discovered in the first Promise 144
Sacrifices an Evidence of Forgiveness 146
Forgiveness with God, manifested by his Prescription of Repentance 150

Con-

Page
Confirmation of the Truth of Forgiveneſs neceſſary 155
Neceſſity of producing Arguments to prove Forgiveneſs 156
Some Sinners actually pardoned and accepted with God 158
Patience of God towards the World, an Evidence of Forgiveneſs 164
Experience of the Saints giving Teſtimony to Forgiveneſs 170
The Evidence that is in Spiritual Forgiveneſs 172
Religious Worſhip of Sinners an Evidence of Forgiveneſs with God 182
Eſpecial Ordinances evidencing Forgiveneſs 188
Prayer for the Pardon of Sin commanded 194
Forgiveneſs manifeſted in the New Covenant 196
Nature, Uſe, and Ends of the firſt Covenant 198
Reaſon of Alteration of the firſt Covenant 200
Forgiveneſs confirmed by the Oath of God 202
——————— Name of God 206
Attributes of God's Nature manifeſting Forgiveneſs 212
What it is to give Glory to God 213
Glory ariſing to God by Forgiveneſs 217
Forgiveneſs manifeſted in the Death of Chriſt 218
Our Obligations to mutual Forgiveneſs proves Forgiveneſs in God 129
Properties of Divine Forgiveneſs 234
Forgiveneſs believed by few 243
Exhortations unto Believing 257
Terms of Peace with God equal and holy 270
Certainty of the final Ruin of them who Believe not ib.
Exhortation to Believing enforced 284
Rules to be obſerved by them who would come to Stability in Obedience 288
Chriſt the only Judge of our Spiritual condition 289
Self-Condemnation conſiſtent with Goſpel-Juſtification and Peace 291
Goſpel-Aſſurance wherein it conſiſteth 292
Senſe of Sin conſiſtent with Aſſurance 293
Sorrow of Sin conſiſtent with Aſſurance 294
Senſe of the Power of Sin conſiſtent with Aſſurance 296
Fears and Temptations conſiſtent with Aſſurance ib.
The Nature and Effects of Goſpel-Aſſurance in Believers 297
Waiting neceſſary to obtain Peace 300
Search of Sin neceſſary to Conſolation 303
Unbelief and Jealouſy diſtinguiſhed 306
——————— their different Effects 309
Differences between Faith and Spiritual Senſe 311
Spiritual Senſe, wherein it conſiſts 313

Page
The Foundation and the Spiritual Building distinguished 315
Complaints Fruitless and Heartless to be avoided 318
Hasty Expressions concerning God to be avoided 323
Judgments of Men's States in the Hand of Christ alone 325
The least Appearance of Grace to be improved 326
Afflictions a Cause of Spiritual Disquietments 329
Means of the Aggravations of Affliction 332
Rules to be observed concerning Afflictions 336
Objections against Believing, from the State of the Soul 341
Two different Estates whereunto all Men belong 342
Saving Grace specifically distinct from common Grace 344
Difference between the State of Grace and Nature discernible 347
Believers may know themselves to be Born of God 352
Rules whereby men may Judge of their Condition in respect to inherent Grace 354
Objections from Weakness in Duty, and the Power of Sin 363

Verses 5th and 6th Opened. 375

Waiting the first Fruit of Faith in a Way of Duty 379
——— on God wherein it consists 380
God himself the Object of our Waiting 390
Waiting on God, whence so necessary ib.
Considerations of God's Being and Attributes, rendering Waiting necessary 392
——————— Of God's Righteousness in his Judgments 406
——————— Of our Condition tending to Humble us 408
Supportment in Trouble, from the Word of Promise 426

Exposition of Verses 7th and 8th. 421

Doctrinal Observations made from them 424

AN

AN EXPOSITION UPON PSALM CXXX.

PSALM CXXX.

1. *OUT of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.*

2. *Lord, hear my voice, let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my ſupplications.*

3. *If thou, Lord, ſhouldſt mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?*

4. *But there is forgiveneſs with thee: That thou mayeſt be feared.*

5. *I wait for the Lord, my ſoul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.*

6. *My ſoul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning, I ſay, more than they that watch for the morning.*

7. *Let Iſrael hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.*

8. *And he ſhall redeem Iſrael from all his iniquities.*

A PARA-

A

PARAPHRASE.

Verſe 1, 2.

1. *Out of the depths have I cried unto thee O Lord.*
2. *Lord hear my voice, let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my ſupplications.*

O Lord, through my manifold ſins and provocations I have brought myſelf into great diſtreſſes. Mine iniquities are always before me, and I am ready to be overwhelmed with them, as with a flood of waters, for they have brought me into depths wherein I am ready to be ſwallowed up. But yet, although my diſtreſs be great and perplexing, I do not, I dare not, utterly deſpond and caſt away all hopes of relief or recovery; nor do I ſeek unto any other remedy, way or means of relief, but I apply myſelf to thee Jehovah, to thee alone: And in my application unto thee, the greatneſs and urgency of my troubles makes my ſoul urgent, earneſt, and preſſing in my ſupplications. Whilſt I have no reſt, I can give thee no reſt; Oh therefore attend and hearken unto the voice of my crying and ſupplications!

Ver. 3.

3. *If thou Lord, ſhouldſt mark iniquities, O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?*

IT is true, O Lord, thou great and terrible, that if thou ſhouldſt deal with me in this condition, with any man living, with the beſt of thy ſaints, according to the ſtrict and exact tenor of the law, which firſt repreſents itſelf to my guilty conſcience, and troubled ſoul; if thou ſhouldſt take notice of, obſerve, and keep in remembrance, mine, or their, or the iniquity of any one, to the end that thou

mightſt

mightſt deal with them, and recompenſe unto them according to the ſentence thereof; there would be neither for me, nor them, any the leaſt expectation of deliverance; all fleſh muſt fail before thee, and the ſpirits which thou haſt made, and that to eternity; for who could ſtand before thee, when thou ſhouldſt ſo execute thy diſpleaſure.

Ver. 4.

BUT, O Lord, this is not abſolutely and univerſally the ſtate of things between thy Majeſty and poor ſinners; thou art in thy nature infinitely good and gracious, ready and free in the purpoſes of thy will to receive them: And there is ſuch a bleſſed way made for the exerciſe of the holy inclinations and purpoſes of thy heart towards them, in the mediation and blood of thy dear Son, that they have aſſured foundations of concluding and believing, that there is pardon and forgiveneſs with thee for them; and which, in the way of thine appointments, they may be partakers of. This way therefore will I, with all that fear thee, perſiſt in: I will not give over, leave thee, or turn from thee, through my fears, diſcouragements, and deſpondencies; but will abide conſtantly in the obſervation of the worſhip which thou haſt preſcribed; and the performance of the obedience which thou doſt require; having great encouragements ſo to do.

4. But there is forgiveneſs with thee: That thou mayſt be feared.

Ver. 5.

AND herein, upon the account of the forgiveneſs that is with thee, O Lord do I wait with all patience, quietneſs and perſeverance: In this work is my whole ſoul engaged; even in an earneſt expectation of thy approach

5. I wait for the Lord, my ſoul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.

approach unto me, in a way of grace, and mercy. And for my encouragement therein, haſt thou given out unto me a bleſſed word of grace, a faithful word of promiſe, wherein my hope is fixed.

Ver 6.

YEA, in the performance and diſcharge of this duty, my ſoul is intent upon thee, and in its whole frame turned towards thee, and that with ſuch diligence and watchfulneſs in looking out after every way, and means of thy appearance, of thy manifeſtation of thyſelf, and coming unto me, that I excell therein thoſe who with longing deſire, heedfulneſs, and earneſt expectation, do wait and watch for the appearance of the morning; and that either that they may reſt from their night watches, or have light for the duties of thy worſhip in the temple, which they are moſt delightful in.

6. My ſoul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning, I ſay more than they that watch for the morning.

Ver. 7, 8.

HEREIN have I found that reſt, peace, and ſatisfaction unto my own ſoul, that I cannot but invite and encourage others, in the like condition, to take the ſame courſe with me: Let then all the Iſrael of God, all that fear him, learn this of me, and from my experience. Be not haſty in your diſtreſſes; deſpond not, deſpair not, turn not aſide unto other remedies; but hope in the Lord; for I can now, in an eſpecial manner, give teſtimony unto this, that there is mercy with him ſuited unto your relief: Yea, whatever your diſtreſs be, the redemption that is with him, is ſo bounteous, plenteous, and unſearchable, that the undoubted iſſue of your performance of this duty will be, that you ſhall be delivered from the guilt of all your ſins, and the perplexities of all your troubles.

7. Let Iſrael hope in the Lord for with the Lord, there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.

8. And he ſhall redeem Iſrael from all his iniquities.

General

General Scope of the whole Psalm.

THE design of the Holy Ghost in this psalm is to express, in the experience of the psalmist, and the working of his faith, the state and condition of a soul greatly in itself perplexed, relieved on the account of grace, and acting itself towards God and his saints, suitably to the discovery of that grace unto him: A great design, and full of great instruction.

And this general prospect gives us the parts and scope of the whole psalm: For,

1. We have the state and condition of the soul therein represented with his deportment in and under that state and condition, in ver. 1, 2. *Out of the depths, have I cried unto thee, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice, let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.*

2. His enquiry after relief: And therein are two things that present themselves unto him; the one whereof, which first offers the consideration of itself to him in his distress, he deprecates, ver. 3. *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?* The other he closeth withal, and finds relief in it, and supportment by it, ver. 5. *But there is forgiveness with thee: that thou mayest be feared.*

Upon this his discovery, and fixing on relief, there is the acting of his faith, and the deportment of his whole person;

1. Towards God, ver. 5. 6. *I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning, I say more than they that watch for the morning.*

2. Towards the saints, ver. 7, 8. *Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*

All which parts, and the various concernments of them, must be opened severally.

And this also gives an account of what is my design from, and upon, the words of this psalm; namely, to declare the perplexed intanglements which may befal a gracious soul, such an one as this psalmist was; with the nature and proper workings of faith in such a condition: Principally aiming at what it is that gives a soul relief and supportment in, and afterward deliverance from, such a perplexed estate.

The Lord in mercy, dispose of these meditations in such a way and manner, as that both he that writes, and they that read, may be made partakers of the benefit, relief, and consolation, intended for his saints, in this psalm by the Holy Ghost.

The state and condition of the soul represented in the psalm. The two first verses opened.

The state and condition of the soul here represented, as the basis on which the process of the psalm is built; with its deportment, or the general acting of its faith in that state, is expressed in the two first verses

Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.

Lord hear my voice; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

1. The present state of the soul under consideration is included in that expression, *Out of the depths.*

Some of the ancients, as Chrysostom, suppose this expression to relate unto the depths of the heart of the psalmist; τὶ ἐστιν ἐκ βαθέων; not from the mouth or tongue only, ἀλλ' ἀπο καρδιας βαθυτατης, but from the depth and bottom of the heart: ἐξ αὐτῶν της διανοίας των βάθρων, from the deepest recesses of the mind.

And indeed the work is used to express the depth of the

the hearts of men, but utterly in another sense, Psal. lxiv. 6. *The heart is deep.*

But the obvious sense of the place, and the constant use of the word in the Hebrew will not admit of this interpretation: *e profundis* from the depths, from *profundus fuit*, is in the plural number *profunditates*, or depths. It is commonly used for vallies, or any deep place whatever, but especially of waters. Vallies and deep places, because of their darkness and solitariness, are accounted places of horror, helplesness and trouble, Psal. xxiii. 4. *When I walk in the valley of the shadow of death*, that is, in the extremity of danger and trouble.

The moral use of the word, as expressing the state and condition of the souls of men, is metaphorical. These depths then are difficulties, or pressures, attended with fear, horror, danger, and trouble.

And they are of two sorts,

1. Providential; in respect of outward distresses, calamities, and afflictions, Psal. lxix. 1. *Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul; (I stick in the mire of the deep, and there is no standing; I am come*, (in the Heb.) *into the depths of waters, and the flood overflows me.)* It is trouble, and the extremity of it, that the psalmist complains of, and which he thus expresseth. He was brought by it into a condition like unto a man ready to be drowned; being cast into the bottom of deep and miry waters; where he had no firm foundation to stand upon, nor ability to come out; as he farther explains himself, ver. 15.

2. There are internal depths; depths of conscience upon the account of sin, Psal. lxxxviii. 6. *Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.* What he intends by this expression, the psalmist declares in the next words, ver. 7. *Thy wrath lieth hard upon me.* Sense of God's wrath upon his conscience, upon the account of sin, was the deep he was cast into; so, ver. 15. speaking of the same matter, saith he, *I suffer thy terrors*, and ver. 16. thy *fierce wrath goeth over me.* Which he calls

water, waves, and deeps: according to the metaphor before opened.

And these are the deeps that are here principally intended, *clamat sub molibus & fluctibus iniquitatem suarum* says Austin on the place. "He cries out under the "weight and waves of his sins."

This the ensuing psalm makes evident, desiring to be delivered from these depths out of which he cried, he deals with God wholly about mercy and forgiveness; and it is sin alone from which forgiveness is a deliverance. The doctrine also that he preacheth upon his delivery, is that of mercy, grace, and redemption, as is manifest from the close of the psalm; and what we have deliverance by, is most upon our hearts when we are delivered.

It is true, indeed, that these deeps do oftentimes concur; as David speaks, *Deep calleth upon deep*, Psal. xlii. 7. The deeps of affliction awaken the conscience to a deep sense of sin. But sin is the disease, affliction only a symptom of it; and in attending a cure, the disease itself is principally to be heeded, the symptom will follow, or depart of itself.

Many interpreters think that this was now David's condition; by great trouble and distress, he was greatly reminded of sin; and we must not therefore wholly pass over that intendment of the word, though we are chiefly to respect that, which he himself, in this address unto God, did principally regard.

This in general is the state and condition of the soul managed in this psalm, and is as the key to the ensuing discourse, or the hinge on which it turns. As to my intendment from the psalm, that which ariseth from hence, may be comprized in these two propositions.

1. Gracious souls, after much communion with God, may be brought into inextricable depths and intanglements on the account of sin. For such the psalmist here expresseth his own condition to have been, and such he was.

2. The inward root of outward distresses, is principally

pally to be attended to in all preſſing trials, ſin, in afflictions.

Gracious ſouls may be brought into depths on the account of ſin. What thoſe depths are.

Before I proceed at all in the further opening of the words, they have all of them reſpect unto the propoſition firſt laid down, I ſhall explain and confirm the truth obtained in it; that ſo it may be underſtood, what we ſay, and whereof we do affirm, in the whole proceſs of our diſcourſe.

It is a ſad truth that we have propoſed unto conſideration: He that hears it ought to tremble in himſelf, that he may reſt in the day of trouble; it ſpeaks out the apoſtles advice, Rom. ix. 20. *Be not high-minded, but fear;* and that alſo, 1 Cor. x. 12. *Let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall.* When Peter had learned this truth by woful experience, after all his boldneſs and forwardneſs, he gives this counſel to all ſaints, *that they would paſs the time of their ſojourning here in fear,* 1 Pet i. 14. Knowing how near, in our greateſt peace and ſerenity, evil and danger may ly at the door.

Some few inſtances of the many that are left on record, wherein this truth is exemplified, may be mentioned, Gen. vi. 9. *Noah was a juſt man, perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God.* He did ſo a long ſeaſon, and that in an evil time, amidſt all ſorts of temptations, *When all fleſh had corrupted their way upon earth,* ver. 12. This put an eminency upon his obedience; and doubtleſs rendered the communion which he had with God, in walking before him, moſt ſweet and precious to him. He was a gracious ſoul upon the redoubled teſtimony of God himſelf. But we know what befel this holy perſon. He that ſhall read the ſtory that is recorded of him, Gen. ix. 21. will eaſily grant, that he was brought into inextricable diſtreſs on the account of ſin. His own drunkenneſs, ver. 21. with the conſequence of it, gives ſcandal unto, and provokes the unnatural

tural luſt of his ſon, ver. 22. and this leads him to the devoting of that ſon, and his poſterity, unto deſtruction, ver. 24, 25. all which, joined with the ſenſe of God's juſt indignation, from whom he had newly received that tremendouſly miraculous deliverance, muſt needs overwhelm him with ſorrow and anxiety of ſpirit.

The matter is more clear in David. Under the Old Teſtament none loved God more than he, none was loved of God more than he. The paths of faith and love wherein he walked, are unto the moſt of us, like the way of an eagle in the air, too high and hard for us; yet to this very day, do the cries of this man after God's own heart, ſound in our ears. Sometimes he complains of broken bones, ſometimes of drowning depths, ſometimes of waves and water-ſpouts, ſometimes of wounds and diſeaſes. ſometimes of wrath and the ſorrows of hell, every where of his ſins, the burden and trouble of them. Some of the occaſion of his depths, darkneſs, intanglements, and diſtreſſes we all know. As no man had more grace than he, ſo none is a greater inſtance of the power of ſin, and the effects of its guilt upon the conſcience than he. But inſtances of this kind are obvious, and occur to the thoughts of all, ſo that they need not be repeated. I ſhall then ſhew,

First, What in particular is intended by the depths and intanglements, on the account of ſin, whereunto gracious ſouls, after much communion with God, may be caſt.

Secondly, Whence it comes to paſs, that ſo they may be, and that oftentimes ſo they are.

First, For the *firſt*, ſome or all of theſe things following do concur to the depths complained of.

Firſt, Loſs of the wonted ſenſe of the love of God, which the ſoul did formerly enjoy. There is a twofold ſenſe of the love of God, whereof believers in this world may be made partakers; there is the tranſient acting of the heart by the Holy Ghoſt, with raviſhing unſpeakable

speakable joys, in apprehension of God's love, and our relation unto him in Christ. This, or the immediate effect of it, is called, *joy unspeakable, and full of glory*, 1 Pet. i. 8. The Holy Ghost shining into the heart, with a clear evidence of the souls interest in all gospel mercies, causeth it to leap for joy, to exult and triumph in the Lord; as being for a season carried above all sense and thought of sin, self, temptation, or trouble. But as God gives the bread of his house to all his children, so these dainties, and high cordials, he reserveth only for the seasons and persons, wherein, and to whom, he knows them to be needful and useful. Believers may be without this sense of love, and yet be in no depths. A man may be strong and healthy, who hath wholesome food tho' he never drink spirits and cordials.

Again, There is an abiding, dwelling sense of God's love upon the hearts of those of whom we speak, who have had long communion with God, consisting in a prevailing gospel persuasion, denoting both the opposition that is made unto it, by Satan and unbelief, and its efficacy in the conquest thereof. This is the root from whence all that peace, and ordinary consolation which believers in this world are made partakers of, do spring and grow. This is that which quickens and enlivens them unto duty, Psal. cxvi. 12, 13. and is the salt that renders their sacrifices and performances savoury to God, and refreshing to themselves; this supports them under their trials, gives them peace, hope, and comfort, in life and death, Psal. xxiii. 4. *Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.* A sense of God's presence in love, is sufficient to rebuke all anxiety and fears in the worst and most dreadful condition, and not only so, but to give in the midst of them, solid consolation and joy. So the prophet expresseth it, Hab. iii. 17, 18. *Although the fig-tree should not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will*

I will joy in the God of my ſalvation. And this is that ſenſe of love, which the choiceſt believers may loſe on the account of ſin; this is one ſtep into their depths. They ſhall not retain any ſuch goſpel apprehenſion of it, as that it ſhould give them reſt, peace, or conſolation; that it ſhould influence their ſouls with delight in duty, or ſupportment in trial; and the nature hereof will be afterwards more fully explained.

Secondly, Perplexed thoughtfulneſs about their great and wretched unkindneſs towards God, is another part of the depths of ſin-intangled ſouls. So David complains, Pſal. lxxvii. 3. *I remembered God*, ſaith he, *and was troubled.* How comes the remembrance of God to be unto him a matter of trouble? In other places he profeſſeth, that it was all his relief and ſupportment: How comes it to be an occaſion of his trouble? All had not been well between God and him; and whereas formerly, in his remembrance of God, his thoughts were chiefly exerciſed about his love and kindeſs, now they were wholly poſſeſt with his own ſin and unkindneſs: This cauſeth his trouble. Herein lies a ſhare of the intanglements occaſioned by ſin. Saith ſuch a ſoul in its ſelf; "Fooliſh creature, haſt thou thus requited the Lord? "Is this the return that thou haſt made unto him for all "his love, his kindneſs, his conſolations, mercies? Is "this thy kindneſs for him, thy love to him? Is this "thy kindneſs to thy friend? Is this thy boaſting of him, "that thou haſt found ſo much goodneſs and excellency "in him and his love, that though all men ſhould for-"ſake him, thou never wouldſt do ſo? Are all thy "promiſes, all thy engagements, which thou madſt unto "God, in times of diſtreſs, upon prevailing obligations, "and mighty impreſſions of his good Spirit upon thy "ſoul, now come to this, that thou ſhouldſt ſo fooliſhly "forget, neglect, deſpiſe, caſt him off? Well, now "he is gone, he is withdrawn from thee, and what wilt "thou do? Art thou not even aſhamed to deſire him to "return." They were thoughts of this nature, that out Peter to the heart upon his fall. The ſoul finds them cruel

cruel as death, and ſtrong as the grave. It is bound in the chains of them, and cannot be comforted, Pſal. xxxviii. 3, 4, 5, 6. And herein conſiſts a great part of the depths enquired after. For this conſideration excites, and puts an edge upon all grieving, ſtraitning, perplexing affections, which are the only means whereby the ſoul of a man may be inwardly troubled, or trouble itſelf; ſuch are ſorrow and ſhame, with that ſelf-diſpliceney and revenge, wherewith they are attended. And as their reaſon and object in this caſe do tranſcend all other occaſions of them, ſo on no other account do they cauſe ſuch ſevere and perplexing reflections on the ſoul as on this.

Thirdly, A revived ſenſe of juſtly deſerved wrath, belongs alſo to theſe depths. This is as the opening of old wounds: When men have paſſed through a ſenſe of wrath, and have obtained deliverance and reſt thro' the blood of Chriſt, to come to their old thoughts again, to be trading afreſh with hell, curſe, law, and wrath, it is a depth indeed. And this often befals gracious ſouls, on the account of ſin, Pſal. lxxxviii. 7. *Thy wrath lieth hard upon me*, ſaith Heman: It preſſed and cruſhed him ſorely. There is a ſelf-judging as to the deſert of wrath, which is conſiſtent with a comforting perſuaſion of an intereſt in Chriſt. This the ſoul finds ſweetneſs in, as it lies in a ſubſerviency to the exaltation of grace; but in this caſe, the ſoul is left under it without that relief. It plungeth itſelf into the curſe of the law, and flames of hell, without any cheering ſupportment from the blood of Chriſt. This is walking in the *valley of the ſhadow of death*. The ſoul converſeth with death, and what ſeems to ly in a tendency thereunto. The Lord alſo, to increaſe his perplexities, puts new life and ſpirit into the law; gives it a freſh commiſſion, as it were, to take ſuch a one into its cuſtody; and the law will never, in this world, be wanting unto its duty.

Fourthly, Oppreſſing apprehenſions of temporal judgments, concur herein alſo; for God will judge his people; and judgment often begins at the houſe of God. Tho'

God, ſaith ſuch an one, ſhould not caſt me off for ever, though he ſhould pardon my iniquities, yet he may ſo take vengeance of my inventions, as to make me feed on gall and wormwood all my days, Pſal. cxix. 120. ſaith David, *My fleſh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.* He knows not what the great God may bring upon him; and being full of a ſenſe of the guilt of ſin, which is the bottom of this whole condition, every judgment of God is full of terror unto him. Sometimes he thinks, God may lay open the filth of his heart, and make him a ſcandal and a reproach in the world, Pſal. xxxix. 8. *Oh,* ſaith he, *make me not a reproach to the fooliſh.* Sometimes he trembles, leſt God ſhould ſtrike him ſuddenly with ſome ſignal judgment, and take him out of the world, in darkneſs and ſorrow; ſo ſaith David, *Take me not away in thy wrath.* Sometimes he fears leſt he ſhall be like Jonah, and raiſe a ſtorm in his family, in the church whereof he is a member, or in the whole nation, *Let them not be aſhamed for my ſake.* Theſe things make his heart ſoft, as Job ſpeaks, and to melt within him. When any affliction or public judgment of God is faſtened to a quick living ſenſe of ſin in the conſcience, it overwhelms the ſoul; whether it be only juſtly feared, or be actually inflicted, as was the caſe of Joſeph's brethren in Egypt. The ſoul is then rolled from one deep to another. Senſe of ſin caſts it on the conſideration of its affliction; and affliction turns it back on a ſenſe of ſin. So deep calleth unto deep, and all God's billows go over the ſoul; and they do each of them make the ſoul tender, and ſharpen its ſenſe unto the other. Affliction ſoftens the ſoul; ſo that the ſenſe of ſin cuts the deeper, and makes the larger wounds; and the ſenſe of ſin weakens the ſoul, and makes affliction ſit the heavier, and ſo increaſeth its burden. In this caſe, that affliction which a man in his uſual ſtate of ſpiritual peace, could have embraced as a ſweet pledge of love, is as goads and thorns in his ſide, depriving him of all reſt and quietneſs; God makes it, as thorns and briars wherewith he will teach ſtubborn

born souls their duty, as Gideon did, the men of Succoth.

Fifthly, There may be added hereunto, prevailing fears for a season, of being utterly rejected by God, of being found a reprobate at the last day. Jonah seems to conclude so, chap. iii. 4. *Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight.* I am lost for ever, God will own me no more. And Heman, Psal. lxxxviii. 4, 5. *I am counted with them that go down into the pit: Free among the dead, like the slain that ly in the grave, whom thou remembrest no more, and they are cut off from thy hand.* This may reach the soul, until the sorrows of hell encompass it, and lay hold upon it; until it be deprived of comfort, peace, rest, until it be a terror to its self, and be ready to choose strangling rather than life. This may befal a gracious soul on the account of sin. But yet, because this fights directly against the life of faith, God doth not, unless it be in extraordinary cases, suffer any of his to ly long in this horrible pit, where there is no water, no refreshment: But this often falls out, that even the saints themselves, are left for a season to a fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation, as to the prevailing apprehension of their minds. And,

Sixthly, God secretly sends his arrows into the soul, that wound and gall it, adding pain, trouble, and disquietness to its disconsolation, Psal. xxxviii. 2. *Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.* Ever and anon in his walking, God shot a sharp piercing arrow, fixing it on his soul that galled, wounded, and perplexed him, filling him with pain and grievous vexation. These arrows are God's rebukes, Psal. xxxix. 11. *When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity.* God speaks in his word, and by his Spirit, in the conscience, things sharp and bitter in the soul, fastning them so as it cannot shake them out. These Job so mournfully complains of, chap. vi. 4. The Lord speaks words with that efficacy, that they pierce the heart quite through; and what the issue then is, David declares,

Pſal. xxxviii. 3: *There is no ſoundneſs*, ſaith he, *in my fleſh, becauſe of thine anger, nor is there any reſt in my bones, becauſe of my ſin.* The whole perſon is brought under the power of them, and all health and reſt is taken away; and,

Seventhly, Unſpiritedneſs and diſability unto duty, in doing or ſuffering, attend ſuch a condition, Pſal. xl. 12. *Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, ſo that I am not able to look up.* His ſpiritual ſtrength was worn away by ſin, ſo that he was not able to addreſs himſelf unto any communion with God. The ſoul now cannot pray with life and power; cannot hear with joy and profit; cannot do good and communicate with chearfulneſs and freedom; cannot meditate with delight and heavenly mindedneſs; cannot act for God with zeal and liberty; cannot think of ſuffering with boldneſs and reſolution; but is ſick, weak, feeble, and bowed down.

Now, I ſay, a gracious ſoul, after much communion with God, may, on the account of ſin, by a ſenſe of the guilt of it, be brought into a ſtate and condition, wherein ſome, more, or all of theſe, with other the like perplexities, may be its portion. And theſe make up the depths whereof the pſalmiſt here complains. What are the ſins, or of what ſorts, that ordinarily caſt the ſouls of believers into theſe depths, ſhall be afterwards declared. I ſhall now ſhew both whence it is, that believers may fall into ſuch a condition; as alſo whence it is that oftentimes, they actually do ſo.

Whence it is that believers may be brought into depths on account of ſin.----Nature of the ſupplies of grace given in the covenant.----How far they extend.----Principles of the power of ſin.

First, The nature of the covenant wherein all believers now walk with God, and wherein all their whole proviſion for obedience is enwrapped, leaves it poſſible for them to fall into theſe depths that have been mentioned. Under the firſt covenant there was no mercy or forgiveneſs

forgiveneſs provided for any ſin: It was neceſſary then that it ſhould exhibit a ſufficiency of grace to preſerve them from every ſin, or it could have been of no uſe at all; this the righteouſneſs of God required, and ſo it was. To have made a covenant wherein there was no proviſion at all of pardon, and not a ſufficiency of grace to keep the covenanters from need of pardon, was not anſwerable to the goodneſs and righteouſneſs of God. But he made man upright, who of his own accord ſought out many inventions.

It is not ſo in the covenant of grace; there is in it pardon provided in the blood of Chriſt; it is not therefore of indiſpenſible neceſſity, that there ſhould be adminiſtered in it, grace effectually preſerving from every ſin: Yet it is on all accounts to be preferred before the other; for beſides the relief by pardon, which the other knew nothing of, there is in it alſo much proviſion againſt ſin, which was not in the other.

Firſt, There is proviſion made in it, againſt all and every ſin that would diſannul the covenant, and make a final ſeparation between God and a ſoul that hath been once taken into the bond thereof. This proviſion is abſolute; God hath taken upon himſelf the making of this good, and the eſtabliſhing this law of the covenant, that it ſhall not by any ſin be diſannulled, Jer. xxxii. 40. *I will*, ſaith God, *make an everlaſting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear into their hearts, that they ſhall not depart from me.* The ſecurity hereof depends not on any thing in ourſelves. All that is in us is to be uſed as a means of the accompliſhment of this promiſe; but the event or iſſue depends abſolutely on the faithfulneſs of God. And the whole certainty and ſtability of the covenant depends on the efficacy of the grace adminiſtred in it, to preſerve men from all ſuch ſins as would diſannul it.

Secondly, There is in this covenant proviſion made for conſtant peace and conſolation, notwithſtanding, and againſt the guilt of ſuch ſins, as through their infirmities

and

and temptations believers are daily expoſed unto. Tho' they fall into ſins every day, yet they do not fall into depths every day. In the tenor of this covenant, there is a conſiſtency between a ſenſe of ſin unto humiliation and peace, with ſtrong conſolation. After the apoſtle had deſcribed the whole conflict that believers have with ſin, and the frequent wounds which they receive thereby, which makes them cry out for deliverance, Rom. vii. 24. he yet concludes, chap. viii. 1. that there is no condemnation unto them, which is a ſufficient and ſtable foundation of peace. So 1 John ii. 1. *Theſe things have I written unto you, that you ſin not; and if any man ſin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous.* Our great buſineſs and care ought to be, that we ſin not; but yet, when we have done our utmoſt, *if we ſay, we have no ſin, we deceive ourſelves,* chap. i. 8. what then ſhall poor, ſinful, guilty creatures do? why, let them go to the Father, by their advocate, and they ſhall not fail of pardon and peace. And ſaith Paul, Heb. vi. 17, 18. *God is abundantly willing that we might have ſtrong conſolation, who fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope ſet before us.* What was his condition who fled of old to the city of refuge for ſafety, from whence this expreſſion is taken? He was guilty of blood, though ſhed at unawares; and ſo, as that he was to die for it, if he eſcaped not to the city of refuge. Though we may have the guilt of ſins upon us, that the law pronounceth death unto, yet flying to Chriſt for refuge, God hath provided not only ſafety, but ſtrong conſolation for us alſo. Forgiveneſs in the blood of Chriſt, doth not only take guilt from the ſoul, but trouble alſo from the conſcience. And in this reſpect doth the apoſtle at large ſet forth the excellency of his ſacrifice, Heb. x. The ſacrifices of the old law, he tells us, could not make perfect the worſhippers, ver. 1. which he proves, ver. 2. becauſe they did never take away, throughly and really conſcience of ſin, that is, depths or diſtreſſes of conſcience about ſin. But now, ſaith he, Jeſus Chriſt in the covenant of grace hath for

ever

ever perfected them that were sanctified, ver. 14. providing for them such stable peace and consolation, as that they shall not need renewing of sacrifices every day, ver. 18. This is the great mystery of the gospel in the blood of Christ; that those who sin every day, should have peace with God all their days, provided their sins fall within the compass of these infirmities, against which this consolation is provided.

Thirdly, There is provision made of grace to prevent and peserve the soul from great and enormous sins, such as in their own nature are apt to wound conscience, and cast the person into such depths and intanglements as wherein he shall have neither rest nor peace: Of what sort these sins are, shall be afterwards declared. There is in this covenant *grace for grace*, John i. 16. and abundance of grace, administered from the all-fulness of Christ; grace reigneth in it, Rom. vi. 6. destroying and crucifying the body of sin.

But this provision in the covenant of grace, against peace ruining, soul-perplexing sins, is not, as to the administration of it, absolute. There are covenant commands and exhortations, on the attendance whereunto, the administration of much covenant-grace doth depend. To watch, pray, improve faith, to stand on our guard continually, to mortify sin, to fight against temptations, with stedfastness, diligence, constancy, are every where prescribed unto us; and that in order unto the insurance of the grace mentioned. These things are on our part the condition of the administration of that abundant grace, which is to preserve us from soul-intangling sins: So Peter informs us, 2 Epist. i. 3. *The divine power of God hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness.* We have from it an habitual furnishment and provision for obedience at all times: Also, saith he, ver. 4. *He hath given unto us great and precious promises, that by them we might be partakers of the divine nature;* what then is in this blessed estate and condition required of us, that we may make a due improvement of the provision made for us, and enjoy the comforting influence of those promises

promiſes, that he preſcribes unto us, ver. 5, 6, 7. *Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godlineſs, and to godlineſs brotherly-kindneſs, and to brotherly kindneſs charity;* that is, carefully and diligently attend to the exerciſe of all the graces of the Spirit, and unto a converſation in all things becoming the goſpel. What then ſhall be the iſſue, if theſe things are attended unto? ver. 8. *If theſe things be in you, and abound, ye ſhall be neither barren nor unfruitful, in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* It is not enough that theſe things be in you? that you have the ſeed and root of them from and by the Holy Ghoſt; but you are to take care that they flouriſh and abound; without which, though the root of the matter may be in you, and ſo you be not wholly devoid of ſpiritual life, yet you will be poor, barren, ſapleſs, withering creatures, all your days. But now, ſuppoſe that theſe things do abound, and we be made fruitful thereby, why then, ſaith he, ver. 10. *If you do theſe things ye ſhall never fall.* What, never fall into ſin? nay, that is not the promiſe; and he that ſays, when he hath done all, *that he hath no ſin, he is a liar.* Or, it is, never fall totally from God? no, the preſervation of the elect, of whom he ſpeaks, from total apoſtaſy, is not ſuſpended on ſuch conditions, eſpecially not any degree of them, ſuch as their abounding imports. But it is that they ſhall not fall into their old ſins from which they were purged, ver. 9. ſuch conſcience-waſting and defiling ſins, as they lived in, in the time and ſtate of their unregeneracy. Thus, though there be in the covenant of grace through Jeſus Chriſt, proviſion made of abundant ſupplies for the ſoul's preſervation from entangling ſins; yet their adminiſtration hath reſpect unto our diligent attendance unto the means of receiving them appointed for us to walk in.

And here lies the latitude of the new covenant; here lies the exerciſe of renewed free-will. This is the field of free voluntary obedience under the adminiſtration of goſpel

goſpel-grace. There are extremes which, in reſpect of the event, it is not concerned in. To be wholly perfect, to be free from every ſin, all failings, all infirmities, that is not provided for, not promiſed in this covenant. It is a covenant of mercy and pardon, which ſuppoſeth a continuance of ſin. To fall utterly and finally from God, that is abſolutely provided againſt. Between theſe two extremes of abſolute perfection and total apoſtaſy, lies the large field of believers obedience and walking with God. Many a ſweet heavenly paſſage there is, and many a dangerous depth in this field. Some walk near to the one ſide, ſome to the other; yea, the ſame perſon may ſometimes preſs hard after perfection, ſometimes be caſt to the very border of deſtruction. Now, between theſe two ly many a ſoul-plunging ſin, againſt which no abſolute proviſion is made, and which for want of giving all diligence to put the means of preſervation in practice, believers are oftentimes overtaken withal.

Fourthly, There is not in the covenant of grace, proviſion made of ordinary and abiding conſolation, for any under the guilt of great ſins, or ſins greatly aggravated, which they fall into by a neglect of uſing and abiding in the fore-mentioned conditions of abounding actual grace. Sins there are, which either becauſe in their own nature they wound and waſte conſcience, or in their effects break forth into ſcandal, cauſing the name of God and the goſpel to be evil ſpoken of, or in ſome of their circumſtances, are full of unkindneſs againſt God, do deprive the ſoul of its wonted conſolation. How, by what means, on what account ſuch ſins come to terrify the conſcience, to break the bones, to darken the ſoul, and to caſt it into inextricable depths, notwithſtanding the relief that is provided of pardon in the blood of Chriſt, I ſhall not now declare; that they will do ſo, and that conſolation is not of equal extent with ſafety, we know. Hence God aſſumes it to himſelf as an act of mere ſovereign grace, to ſpeak peace and refreſhment unto the ſouls of his ſaints, in their

depths of sin-intanglements, Isa. lvii. 18, 19. And, indeed, if the Lord had not thus provided, that great provocation should stand in need of special reliefs, it might justly be feared, that the negligence of believers, might possibly bring much bitter fruit.

Only this must be observed by the way, that what is spoken relates to the sense of sinners in their own souls, and not to the nature of the thing itself. There is, in the gospel, consolation provided against the greatest as well as the least sins. The difference ariseth from God's sovereign communication of it, according to their tenor of the covenants administration, which we have laid down: Hence, because under Moses's law there was an exception made of some sins, for which there was no sacrifice appointed, so that those who were guilty of them could no way be justified from them, that is carnally to their interest in the judaical church and polity; Paul tells the Jews, Acts xiii. 38, 39. *That through Jesus Christ was preached unto them the forgiveness of sins, and that by him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.* There is now no exception of any particular sins, as to pardon and peace; but what we have spoken, relates unto the manner and way, wherein God is pleased to administer consolation to the souls of sinning believers.

And this is the evidence which I shall offer to prove, that the souls of believers, after much gracious communion with God, may yet fall into inextricable depths on the account of sin; whence it is, that actually they oftentimes do so, shall be further declared.

The principles of this assertion are known; I shall therefore only touch upon them.

First, The nature of indwelling sin, as it remains in the best of the saints in this life, being a little considered will evidence to us from whence it is, that they are sometimes surprized and plunged into the depths mentioned. For,

1st, Though the strength of every sin be weakened by

by grace, yet the root of no ſin, is in this life wholly taken away. Luſt is like the ſtubborn Canaanites, who after the general conqueſt of the land, would dwell in it ſtill, Judges xvii. 12. Indeed, when Iſrael grew ſtrong, they brought them under tribute, but they could not utterly expel them. The kingdom and rule belongs to grace; and when it grows ſtrong, it brings ſin much under; but it will not wholly be driven out. The body of death is not utterly to be done away, but in and by the death of the body. *In the fleſh* of the beſt ſaints *there dwelleth no good thing*, Rom. vii. 8. but the contrary is there, that is the root of all evil. The fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, as the ſpirit luſteth againſt the fleſh, Gal v. 17. As then there is an univerſality in the actings of the ſpirit in its oppoſing all evil, ſo alſo there is an univerſality in the actings of the fleſh for the furtherance of it.

2*dly*, Some luſts or branches of original corruption do obtain in ſome perſon ſuch advantages, either from nature, cuſtom, employment, ſociety, or the like circumſtances, that they become like the Canaanites that had iron chariots; it is a very difficult thing to ſubdue them. Well, it is, if war be maintained conſtantly againſt them, for they will almoſt always be in actual rebellion.

3*dly*, Indwelling-ſin, though weakened, retaineth all its properties; the properties of a thing follow its nature. Where the nature of any thing is, there are all its natural properties. What are theſe properties of indwelling-ſin, I ſhould here declare, but that I have handled the whole power and efficacy, the nature and properties of it, in a treatiſe to that only purpoſe. In brief, they are ſuch, as it is no wonder that ſome believers are by them caſt into depths; but it is indeed, that any do eſcape them. But thereof the reader may ſee at large my diſcourſe on this particular ſubject.

Secondly, Add hereunto the power and prevalency of temptation; which becauſe alſo, I have already in a

ſpecial diſcourſe to that purpoſe inſiſted on, I ſhall not here farther lay open.

Thirdly, The ſovereign pleaſure of God in dealing with ſinning ſaints muſt alſo be conſidered. Divine love and wiſdom work not towards all in the ſame manner. God is pleaſed to continue peace unto ſome with a *non-obſtante*, for great provocations. Love ſhall humble them, and rebukes of kindneſs ſhall recover them from their wanderings. Others he is pleaſed to bring into the depths we have been ſpeaking of. But yet I may ſay generally, ſignal provocations meet with one of theſe two events from God.

1*ſt*, Thoſe in whom they are, are left into ſome ſignal barrenneſs, and fruitleſneſs in their generations; they ſhall wither, grow barren, worldly, ſapleſs, and be much caſt out of the hearts of the people of God. Or,

2*dly*, They ſhall be exerciſed in theſe depths, from whence their way of deliverance is laid down in this pſalm. Thus, I ſay, God deals with his ſaints in great variety: Some ſhall have all their bones broken, when others ſhall have only the gentle ſtrokes of the rod. We are in the hand of mercy, and he may deal with us as ſeems good unto him; but for our parts, great ſins ought to be attended with expectations of great depths and perplexities.

And this is the ſtate of the ſoul propoſed in this pſalm, and by us, unto conſideration. Theſe are the depths wherein it is entangled; theſe are the ways and means whereby it is brought into theſe depths. Its deportment in, and under this ſtate and condition, lies next in our way. But before I proceed thereunto, I ſhall annex ſome few things unto what hath been delivered, tending to the farther opening of the whole caſe before us; and they are, 1. What are, or of what ſort, thoſe ſins are, which uſually caſts the ſouls of believers into theſe depths; and then, 2. Inſiſt on ſome aggravations of them.

What

What ſins uſually bring believers into great ſpiritual diſtreſſes.----Aggravations of theſe ſins.

Firſt, Sins in their own nature waſting conſcience, are of this ſort. Sins that riſe in oppoſition to all of God that is in us; that is the light of grace and nature alſo: Such are the ſins that caſt David into his depths. Such are the ſins enumerated, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. *Be not deceived,* ſaith the apoſtle, *neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abuſers of themſelves with mankind. Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God.* Certain it is, that believers may fall into ſome of the ſins here mentioned. Some have done ſo, as is left on record; the apoſtle ſays not, thoſe who have committed any of theſe ſins, but ſuch ſinners ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God, that is, who live in theſe, or any of theſe ſins, or any like unto them. There is no proviſion of mercy made for ſuch ſinners. Theſe and the like are ſins which in their own nature, without the conſideration of aggravating circumſtances, (which yet, indeed, really, in believers, they can never be without) are able to plunge a ſoul into depths. Theſe ſins cut the locks of mens ſpiritual ſtrength; and it is in vain for them to ſay, we will go, and do as at other times. Bones are not broken without pain; nor great ſins brought on the conſcience without trouble. But I need not inſiſt on theſe. Some ſay that they deprive even true believers of all their intereſt in the love of God, but unduly; all grant that they bereave them of all comforting evidence, and well grounded aſſurance of it. So they did David and Peter, and herein lies no ſmall part of the depths we are ſearching into.

Secondly, There are ſins, which though they do not riſe up in the conſcience with ſuch a bloody guilt as thoſe mentioned, yet by reaſon of ſome circumſtances and aggravations, God takes them ſo unkindly, as to make them a root of diſquietneſs and trouble to the ſoul all its days. He ſays of ſome ſins of ungodly men, *As I live,*

live, this iniquity ſhall not be purged from you until ye die. If you are come to this height, you ſhall not eſcape, I will not ſpare you. And there are provocations in his own people, which may be ſo circumſtantiated, as that he will not let them paſs, before he have caſt them into depths, and made them cry out for deliverance. Let us conſider ſome of them.

1*ſt*, Miſcarriages under ſignal enjoyments of love and kindneſs from God, are of this ſort. When God hath given unto any one expreſſive manifeſtations of his love, convinced him of it, made him ſay in the inmoſt parts of his heart, This is undeſerved love and kindneſs; then for him to be negligent in walking with God, it carrieth an unkindneſs with it, that ſhall not be forgotten. It is a remark upon the unkindneſs of Solomon, that he fell into them after God had appeared unto him twice; and all ſins under, or after eſpecial mercies, will meet, one time or other, with eſpecial rebukes. Nothing doth diſtreſs the conſcience of a ſinner, than the remembrance, in darkneſs, of abuſed light, in deſertions, of neglected love. This God will make them ſenſible of. *Though I have redeemed them*, ſaith God, *yet they have ſpoken lies againſt me*, Hoſ. vii. 15. So chap. xiii. 4, 5, 6, 7. When God hath in his providence dealt graciouſly with a perſon, it may be delivered him from ſtraits and troubles, ſet him in a large place, prevented him with many fruits and effects of his goodneſs, bleſſed him in his perſon, relations, and employments, dealt well with his ſoul, in giving him a gracious ſenſe of his love in Chriſt, for ſuch a one to fall under ſinful miſcarriages, it goes to the heart of God, and ſhall not be paſſed over. Undervaluations of love are great provocations. Hath Nabal thus requited my kindneſs ſaith David? I cannot bear it. And the clearer the convictions of any in this kind were, the more ſevere will their reflections be upon them themſelves.

2*dly*, Sins under or after great afflictions, are of this importance alſo. God doth not afflict willingly, or chaſten us merely for his pleaſure; he doth it to make us partakers

partakers of his holineſs. To take ſo little notice of his hand therein as under it, or after it, not to watch againſt the workings and ſurprizals of ſin, it hath unkindneſs in it; *I ſmote him,* ſaith God, *and he went on frowardly in the way of his own heart.* Theſe provocations of his ſons and daughters, he cannot bear with. Hath God brought thee into the furnace, ſo that thou haſt melted under his hand, and in pity and compaſſion hath given thee enlargement; if thou haſt ſoon forgotten his dealings with thee, is it any wonder, if he mind thee again, by troubles in thy ſoul?

3*dly*, Breaking off from under ſtrong convictions, and dawnings of love before converſion, are oftentimes remembered upon the conſcience afterwards. When the Lord by his Spirit ſhall mightily convince the heart of ſin, and make withal ſome diſcoveries of his love, and the excellencies of Chriſt unto it, ſo that it begins to yield, and be overpowered, being almoſt perſuaded to be a Chriſtian; if then, through the ſtrength of luſt, or unbelief, it goes back to the world or ſelf-righteouſneſs; its folly hath unkindneſs with it, that ſometimes ſhall not be paſſed by. God can, and often doth, put forth the greatneſs of his power, for the recovery of ſuch a ſoul; but yet he will deal with him, about this contempt of his love, and the excellency of his Son, in the dawnings of them revealed unto him.

4*thly*, Sudden forgetfulneſs of indearing manifeſtations of ſpecial love. This God cautions his people againſt, as knowing their proneneſs thereunto, Pſal. lxxxv. 8. *God the Lord will ſpeak peace to his people and his ſaints; but let them not turn again to folly.* Let them take heed of their aptneſs to forget indearing manifeſtations of ſpecial love. When God at any time draws nigh to a ſoul by his Spirit, in his word, with gracious words of peace and love, giving a ſenſe of his kindneſs upon the heart by the Holy Ghoſt, ſo that it is filled with joy unſpeakable and glorious thereon; for this ſoul, upon a temptation, a diverſion, or by mere careleſſneſs and neglect, which oftentimes falls out, to ſuffer

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this sense of love to be as it were obliterated, and so to lose that influencing efficacy unto obedience which it is accompanied withal, this also is full of unkindness. An account hereof we have, Cant. v. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. In the first verse, the Lord Jesus draws nigh with full provision of gospel mercies for his beloved; *I am come unto thee*, saith he, *O my sister;* I have brought myrrh and spice, honey and wine with me: Whatever is spiritually sweet and delightful; mercy, grace, peace, consolation, joy, assurance, they are all here in readiness for thee, ver. 2. The spouse in her drowsy indisposition takes little notice of this gracious visit; she is diverted by other matters, and knows not how to attend fully and wholly to the blessed communion offered unto her; but excuseth herself as otherwise engaged. But what is the issue? Christ withdraws, leaves her in the dark, in the midst of many disconsolations, and long it is before she obtain any recovery.

5*thly*, Great opportunities for service neglected, and great gifts not improved, are oftentimes the occasion of plunging the soul into great depths. Gifts are given to trade withal for God; opportunities are market-days for that trade: To napkin up the one, and to let slip the other, will end in trouble and disconsolation. Disquietments and perplexities of heart, are worms that will certainly breed in the rust of unexercised gifts. God loseth a revenue of glory and honour by such slothful souls; and he will make them sensible of it. I know some at this day, whom omissions of opportunities for service, are ready to sink into the grave.

6*thly*, Sins after especial warnings, are usually thus issued. In all that variety of special warnings which God is pleased to use toward sinning saints, I shall single out one only. When a soul is wrestling with some lust or temptation, God, by his providence, causeth some special word, in the preaching of the gospel, or the administration of some ordinance thereof, peculiarly suited to the state and condition of the soul, by the ways of rebuke or persuasion, to come nigh and enter the inmost

inmost parts of the heart. The soul cannot but take notice that God is nigh to him, that he is dealing with him; and calling on him to look to him for assistance. And he seldom gives such warnings to his saints, but that he is nigh them in an eminent manner, to give them relief and help, if in answer unto his call, they apply themselves unto him; but if his care and kindness herein be neglected, his following reproofs are usually more severe.

7thly, Sins that bring scandal, seldom suffer the soul to escape depths. Even in great sins, God in chastning takes more notice oft-times of the scandal, than the sin; as 2 Sam. xii. 14. Many professors take little notice of their worldliness, their pride, their passion, their lavish tongues; but the world doth, and the gospel is disadvantaged by it; and no wonder if themselves find from the hand of the Lord, the bitter fruits of them in the issue.

And many other such aggravations of sins there are which heighten provocations in their own nature not of so dreadful an aspect as some others, into a guilt plunging a soul into depths. Those which have been named, may suffice in the way of instance; which is all that we have aimed at, therefore forbear enlargements on the several heads of them.

The consideration of some aggravations of the guilt of these sins, which bring the soul usually into the condition before laid down, shall close this discourse.

First, The soul is furnished with a principle of grace, which is continually operative and working for its preservation from such sins. The new creature is living and active for its growth, increase and security, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, Gal. v. 17. *It lusteth against the flesh.* It is naturally active for its own preservation and increase; as new born children have a natural inclination to the food that will keep them alive, and cause them to grow, 1 Pet. ii. 2. The soul then cannot fall into these entangling sins, but it must

be with an high neglect of that very principle which is beſtowed upon it for quite contrary ends and purpoſes. The labourings, luſtings, deſires, cryings of it are neglected. Now, it is from God, and of God, and is the renovation of his image in us; that which God owneth and careth for; the wounding of its vitals, the ſtifling of its operations, the neglect of its endeavours for the ſouls preſervation, do always attend ſins of the importance ſpoken unto.

Secondly, Whereas this new creature, this principle of life and obedience, is not able of itſelf to preſerve the ſoul from ſuch ſins as will bring it into depths; there is full proviſion for continual ſupplies made for it, and all it wants in Jeſus Chriſt. There are treaſures of relief in Chriſt, whereunto the ſoul may at any time repair, and find ſuccour againſt the incurſions of ſin. He ſays to the ſoul as David unto Abiathar when he fled from Doeg: *Abide with me, fear not; he that ſeeketh thy life, ſeeketh my life, but with me thou ſhalt be in ſafety.* Sin is my enemy no leſs than thine; it ſeeketh the life of thy ſoul, and it ſeeketh my life; abide with me, for with me thou ſhalt be in ſafety. This the apoſtle exhorts us unto, Heb. iv. 6. *Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* If ever it be a time of need with a ſoul, it is ſo when it is under the aſſaults of provoking ſins; at ſuch a time there is a ſuitable and ſeaſonable help in Chriſt for ſuccour and relief: The new creature begs, with ſighs and groans, that the ſoul would apply itſelf unto him. To neglect him, with all his proviſion of grace, whilſt he ſtands calling unto us, *Open unto me, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night;* to deſpiſe the ſighing of the poor priſoner, the new creature, by ſin appointed to die, cannot but be an high provocation. May not God complain and ſay; See theſe poor creatures; they were once intruſted with a ſtock of grace in themſelves; this they caſt away, and themſelves into the utmoſt miſery thereby: That they might not utterly periſh

riſh a ſecond time, their portion and ſtock is now laid up in another; a ſafe treaſurer; in him are their lives and comforts ſecured. But ſee their wretched negligence; they venture all, rather than they will attend to him for ſuccour. And what think we is the heart of Chriſt, when he ſees his children giving way to conſcience-waſting ſins, without that application unto him, which the life and peace of their own ſouls call upon them for. Theſe are not ſins of daily infirmity, which cannot be avoided; but their guilt is always attended with a neglect, more or leſs, of the relief provided in Chriſt againſt them. The means of preſervation from them is bleſſed, ready, nigh at hand; the concernment of Chriſt in our preſervation great, of our ſouls unſpeakable; to neglect and deſpiſe means, Chriſt, ſouls, peace and life, muſt needs render guilt very guilty.

Thirdly, Much to the ſame purpoſe may be ſpoken about that ſignal proviſion that is made againſt ſuch ſins as theſe in the covenant of grace, as hath been already declared; but I ſhall not further carry on this diſcourſe.

And this may ſuffice, as to the ſtate and condition of the ſoul in this pſalm repreſented. We have ſeen what the depths are, wherein it is intangled, and by what ways and means any one may come to be caſt into them. The next thing that offers itſelf unto our conſideration, is the deportment of a gracious ſoul in that ſtate and condition; or what courſe it ſteers towards a delivery.

The duty and actings of a believer under diſtreſſes from a ſenſe of ſin.----His application unto God. To God alone.----Earneſtneſs and intention of mind therein.

The words of theſe two verſes declare alſo the deportment of the ſoul in the condition that we have deſcribed; that is, what it doth, and what courſe it ſteers for relief. *I have cryed unto thee, O Lord; Lord, hear*

my voice, let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

There is in the words a general application made in a tendency unto relief; wherein is first to be considered, to whom the application is made, and that is *Jehovah. I have cried unto thee,* JEHOVAH. God gave out that name to his people to confirm their faith in the stability of his promises, Exod. iii. He who is *Being* himself, will assuredly give being and subsistence to his promises. Being to deal with God about the promises of grace, he makes his application to him under this name, I call upon thee, Jehovah.

In the application itself may be observed,

First, The *anthropopathy* of the expression, he prays that God would cause his ears to be attentive; after the manner of men, who seriously attend to what is spoken to them, when they turn aside from that which they regard not.

Secondly, The *earnestness* of the soul in the work it hath in hand; which is evident both from the reduplication of his request, *Lord, hear my voice, let thine ears be attentive to my voice,* and the emphaticalness of the words he maketh use of. *Let thine ears,* saith he, *be,* (in the Heb.) *diligently attentive.* The word signifies the most diligent heedfulness and close attention; *let thine ears be very attentive;* and unto what? (in the Heb.) *to the voice of my supplications; deprecationum mearum,* generally say interpreters, *of my deprecations;* or earnest prayers for the averting of evil or punishment. But the word is from the Hebrew, *Gratiosus fuit,* to be *gracious* or *merciful;* so that it signifies properly supplications for grace. *Be attentive,* saith he, *O Lord, unto my supplications for grace and mercy,* which, according to my extreme necessity, I now address myself to make unto thee. And in these words doth the psalmist set forth in general the frame and working of a gracious soul, being cast into depths and darkness by sin.

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The foundation of what I shall farther thence pursue, lies in these two propositions.

First, The only attempt of a sinful intangled soul for relief, lies in application to God alone. *To thee,* Jehovah, *have I cried, Lord hear.*

Secondly, Depths of sin-intanglements will put a gracious soul on intense and earnest applications unto God. *Lord hear, Lord attend.* Dying men do not use to cry out slothfully for relief.

What may be thought necessary in general for the direction of a soul in the state and condition described, shall briefly be spoken unto from these two propositions.

First, Trouble, danger, disquietment, arguing not only things evil, but a sense in the mind and soul of them, will of themselves put those in whom they are upon seeking relief. Every thing would naturally be at rest; a drowning man needs no exhortation to endeavour his own deliverance and safety: And spiritual troubles will, in like manner, put men on attempts for relief. To seek for no remedy is to be senselessly obdurate, or wretchedly desperate, as Cain and Judas. We may suppose then, that the principle business of every soul in depths, is to endeavour deliverance. They cannot rest in that condition wherein they have no rest. In this endeavour, what course a gracious soul steers, is laid down in the first proposition, negatively and positively. He applies himself not to any thing but God, he applies himself unto God. An eminent instance we have of it in both parts, or both to the one side and the other, Hos. xiv. 3. *Ashur,* says these poor distressed returning sinners, *shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.*

mercy. Their application unto God is attended with a renunciation of every other way of relief.

Several things there are that sinners are apt to apply themselves unto for relief in their perplexities, which prove unto them as waters that fail. How many things have the Romanists invented to deceive souls withal? Saints and angels, the blessed Virgin, the wood of the cross, confessions, penances, masses, pilgrimages, and dirges, purgatories, papal pardons, works of compensation, and the like, are made entrances for innumerable souls into everlasting ruin. Did they know the terror of the Lord, the nature of sin, and the mediation of Christ, they would be ashamed and confounded in themselves for these abominations, they would not say unto these their idols, Ye are our gods, come and save us. How short do all their contrivances come of his, that would fain be offering rivers of oil, *yea, the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul, his first born for his transgression*, Micah vi. 7. who yet gains nothing, but an aggravation of his sin and misery thereby: Yea, the heathens went beyond them in devotion and expence. It is no new enquiry what course sin-perplexed souls should take for relief. From the foundation of the world, the minds of far the greatest part of mankind have been exercised in it: As was their light or darkness, such was the course they took; among those who were ignorant of God, this enquiry brought forth all that diabolical superstition which spread itself over the face of the whole world. Gentilism being destroyed by the power and efficacy of the gospel, the same enquiry working in the minds of darkned men in conjunction with other lusts, brought forth the papacy. When men had lost a spiritual acquaintance with the covenant of grace, and mystery of the gospel, the design of eternal love, and efficacy of the blood of Christ, they betook themselves, in part, or in whole, for relief under their entanglements, unto the broken cisterns mentioned. They are of two sorts; self, and other things, for those

thoſe other things which belong unto their falſe worſhip, being abominated by all the ſaints of God, I ſhall not need to make any farther mention of them. That which relates unto ſelf, is not confined unto popery, but confines itſelf to the limits of human nature, and is predominate over all that are under the law; that is, to ſeek for relief in ſin-diſtreſſes by ſelf-endeavours, ſelf-righteouſneſs: Hence many poor ſouls in ſtraits apply themſelves to themſelves. They expect their cure from the ſame hand that wounded them. This was the life of Judaiſm, as the apoſtle informs us, Rom. x. 3. and all men under the law, are ſtill animated by the ſame principle. *They return, but not unto the Lord.* Finding themſelves in depths, in diſtreſſes about ſin, what courſe do they take? This they will do, that they will do no more; this ſhall be their ordinary courſe, and that they will do in an extraordinary manner; as they have offended, whence their trouble ariſeth, ſo they will amend and look that their peace ſhould ſpring from thence, as if God and they ſtood on equal terms. In this way ſome ſpend all their days, ſinning and amending, amending and ſinning, without once coming to repentance and peace. This the ſouls of believers watch againſt. They look on themſelves as fatherleſs, *in thee the fatherleſs findeth mercy*, that is helpleſs; without the leaſt ground of hopes in themſelves, or expectation from themſelves. They know their repentance, their amendment, their ſupplications, their humiliations, their faſtings, their mortifications, will not relieve them: Repent they will, and amend they will, and pray, and faſt, and humble their ſouls, for they know theſe things to be their duty; but they know that their goodneſs extends not to him with whom they have to do, nor is he profited by their righteouſneſs: They will be in the performance of all duties, but they expect not deliverance by any duty. It is God, ſay they with whom they have to do; our buſineſs is to hearken what he will ſay unto us.

There are alſo other ways whereby ſinful ſouls deſtroy

ſtroy themſelves by falſe reliefs. Diverſions from their perplexing thoughtfulneſs pleaſeth them: They will fix on ſomething or other that cannot cure their diſeaſe, but ſhall only make them forget that they are ſick. As Cain under the terror of his guilt, departed from the preſence of the Lord, and ſought inward reſt in outward labour and employment, he *went and built a city*, Gen. iv. 6. Such courſes Saul fixed on; firſt muſic, then a witch. Nothing more ordinary than for men thus to deal with their convictions. They ſee their ſickneſs, feel their wound, and go to the Aſſyrian, Hoſ. v. 13. and this inſenſibly leads men to atheiſm. Frequent applications of creature diverſions unto convictions of ſin, are a notable means of bringing on final impenitency. Some drunkards had, it may be, never been ſo, had they not been firſt convinced of other ſins: they ſtrive to ſtifle the guilt of one ſin with another. They fly from themſelves unto themſelves, from their conſciences unto their luſts; and ſeek for relief from ſin by ſinning. This is ſo far from believers, that they will not allow lawful things to be a diverſion to their diſtreſs: Uſe lawful things they may and will, but not to divert their thoughts from their diſtreſſes; theſe they know muſt be iſſued between God and them: Wear off they will not, but muſt be taken away. Theſe rocks, and the like, whereof there are innumerable, I ſay, a gracious ſoul takes care to avoid. He knows it is God alone who is the Lord of his conſcience where his depths ly; God alone againſt whom he hath ſinned; God alone who can pardon his ſin. From dealing with him, he will neither be enticed nor diverted. *To thee, O Lord*, ſaith he, *do I come;* thy word concerning me muſt ſtand; upon thee will I wait; if thou haſt no delight in me, I muſt periſh: Other remedies I know are vain: I intend not to ſpend my ſtrength for that which is not bread; *Unto thee do I cry.* Here a ſin-intangled ſoul is to fix itſelf: Trouble excites it to look for relief; many things without it preſent themſelves as a diverſion; many things within it offer themſelves for a remedy: For-

get

get thy ſorrow, ſay the former; eaſe thyſelf of it by us, ſay the latter; the ſoul refuſeth both, as phyſicians of no value, and to God alone makes its application: He hath wounded, and he alone can heal. And until any one that is ſenſible of the guilt of ſin, will come off from all reſerves to deal immediately with God, it is in vain for him to expect relief.

Secondly, Herein it is intenſe, earneſt and urgent, which was the ſecond thing obſerved. It is no time now to be ſlothful; the ſouls all, its greateſt concernments are at the ſtake. Dull, cold, formal, cuſtomary applications to God, will not ſerve the turn: Ordinary actings of faith, love, fervency, uſual ſeaſons, opportunities, duties, anſwer not this condition. To do no more than ordinary now, is to do nothing at all. He that puts forth no more ſtrength and activity for his deliverance when he is in depths, ready to periſh, than he doth, or hath need to do, when he is at liberty in plain and ſmooth paths, is ſcarcely like to eſcape. Some in ſuch conditions, are careleſs and negligent; they think in ordinary courſe, to wear off their diſtempers; and that although at preſent they are ſenſible of their danger, they ſhall yet have peace at laſt; in which frame there is much contempt of God: Some deſpond and languiſh away under their preſſures. Spiritual ſloth influenceth both theſe ſorts of perſons. Let us ſee the frame under conſideration exemplified in another. We have an inſtance in the ſpouſe, Cant. iii. 1, 2, 3. She had loſt the preſence of Chriſt, and ſo was in the very ſtate and condition before deſcribed, ver. 1. It was night with her, a time of darkneſs and diſconſolation; and ſhe ſeeks for her beloved: *By night on my bed I ſought him whom my ſoul loveth.* Chriſt was abſent from her, and ſhe was left unto depths and darkneſs upon that account. Wherefore, ſhe ſeeks for him; but as the moſt are apt to do in the like ſtate and condition, ſhe mends not her pace, goes not out of, or beyond her courſe of ordinary duties; or the frame ſhe was uſually in at other

times. But what is the iſſue? Saith ſhe, *I found him not.* This is not the way to recover a ſenſe of loſt love; nor to get out of her entanglements. And this puts her on another courſe, ſhe begins to think, that if things continue in this eſtate, ſhe ſhall be undone; I go on indeed with the performance of duties ſtill, but I have not the preſence of my beloved; I meet not with Chriſt in them: My darkneſs and troubles abide ſtill; if I take not ſome other courſe, I ſhall be loſt. Well, ſaith ſhe, *I will riſe now*, ver. 2. I will ſhake off all that eaſe and ſloth, and cuſtomarineſs, that cleave to me; ſome more lively vigorous courſe muſt be fixed on. Reſolutions for new, extraordinary, vigorous, conſtant application unto God, are the firſt general ſtep or degree, of a ſin-intangled ſoul acting towards a recovery, *I will riſe now.* And what will ſhe do when ſhe is thus reſolved? *I will*, ſaith ſhe, *go about the ſtreets, and broad ways, and ſeek him whom my ſoul loveth.* I will leave no way or means unattempted, whereby I may poſſibly come to a freſh enjoyment of him. If a man ſeek for a friend, he can look for him only in the ſtreets and in the broad ways; that is, either in towns, or in the fields. So will I do ſaith the ſpouſe; in what way, ordinance, or inſtitution ſoever, in or by what duty ſoever, public or private, of communion with others, or ſolitary retiredneſs, Chriſt ever was, or may be found; or peace obtained, I will ſeek him, and not give over till I come to an enjoyment of him. And this frame, this reſolution, a ſoul in depths muſt come unto, if ever it expect deliverance. For the moſt part, *mens wounds ſtink, and are corrupt becauſe of their fooliſhneſs*, as the pſalmiſt complains, Pſal. xxxviii. 5. they are wounded by ſin; and through ſpiritual ſloth they neglect their cure; this weakens them, and diſquiets them day by day; yet they endure all, rather than they will come out of their carnal eaſe to deal effectually with God in an extraordinary manner. It was otherwiſe with David, Pſal. xxii. 1, 2. *Why*, ſaith he, *art thou ſo far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God,*

God, I cry in the day-time, and in the night-ſeaſon, and am not ſilent. What ails the man? Can he not be quiet night nor day? never ſilent, never hold his peace? and if he be ſomewhat diſquieted, can he not contain himſelf, but that he muſt roar, and cry out? yea, he muſt roar thus *all the day long*, as he ſpeaks, Pſal. xxxii. 3. and *groan all the night*, as Pſal. vi. 6. what is the matter with all this roaring, ſighing, tears, roaring all the day, all night long? Ah! let him alone, his ſoul is bitter in him; he is fallen into depths; the Lord is withdrawn from him, trouble is hard at hand, yea, he is full of anxiety on the account of ſin; there is no quietneſs and ſoundneſs in him; and he muſt thus earneſtly and reſtleſly apply himſelf for relief. Alas! What ſtrangers for the moſt part are men now-a-days to this frame? How little of the workings of this ſpirit is found amongſt us? And is not the reaſon of it, that we value the world more, and heaven and heavenly things leſs than he did? that we can live at a better rate without a ſenſe of the love of God in Chriſt, than he could do? and is it not hence that we every day ſee ſo many withering profeſſors, that have in a manner loſt all communion with God, beyond a little lip-labour, or talking? the filthy ſavour of whoſe wounds are offenſive to all but themſelves; and ſo they will go on ready to die and periſh, rather than with this holy man thus ſtir up themſelves to meet the Lord. Heman was alſo like unto him, Pſal. lxxxviii. 11, 12. What ſenſe he had of his depths, he declares, ver. 3. *My ſoul*, ſaith he, *is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh to the grave.* And what courſe doth he ſteer in this heavy, ſorrowful, and diſconſolate condition? Why, ſaith he, *O Lord God of ſalvation, I have cried day and night unto thee, let my prayer come before thee, incline thine ear unto my cry*, ver. 1, 2. Day and night he cries to God of his ſalvation, and that with earneſtneſs and importunity. This was his buſineſs, thus was he exerciſed all his days.

This is that which is aimed at; if a gracious ſoul be brought into the depths before-mentioned and deſcribed,

by reaſon of ſin, when the Lord is pleaſed to lead him forth towards a recovery, he cauſeth him to be vigorous and reſtleſs in all the duties whereby he may make application to him for deliverance, Now, wherein this intenſeneſs and earneſtneſs of the ſoul in its applications unto God doth principally conſiſt, I ſhall briefly declare, when I have touched a little upon ſome conſiderations and grounds that ſtir it up thereunto.

Firſt, The greateſt of mens concernments may well put them on this earneſtneſs. Men do not uſe to deal with dull and ſlothful ſpirits about their greateſt concerns. David tells us, that he was more concerned in the light of God's countenance, than the men of the world could be in their corn and wine, Pſal. iv. 6, 7. Suppoſe a man of the world ſhould have his houſe, wherein all his ſtock and riches are laid up, ſet on fire, and ſo the whole be in danger under his eye to be conſumed; would he be calm and quiet in the conſideration of it? Would he not beſtir himſelf with all his might, and call in all the help he could obtain? And that becauſe his portion, his all, his great concernments lies at ſtake? And ſhall the ſoul be ſlothful, careleſs, dull, ſecure, when fire is put to its eternal concernments? when the light of God's countenance, which is of more eſteem unto him than the greateſt increaſe of corn and wine can be to the men of the world, is removed from him? It was an argument of prodigious ſecurity in Jonah, that he was faſt aſleep when the ſhip wherein he was, was ready to be caſt away for his ſake. And will it be thought leſs in any ſoul, who being in a ſtorm of wrath and diſpleaſure from God, ſent out into the deep after him, ſhall neglect it, and ſleep, as Solomon ſays, on the top of a maſt in the midſt of the ſea? How did that poor creature, whoſe heart was mad on his idols, Judges xviii. 24. cry out, when he was deprived of them? *You have taken away my gods*, ſaith he, *and what have I more?* And ſhall a gracious ſoul loſe his God, through his own folly, the ſenſe of his love, the

conſolation

conſolation of his preſence, and not with all his might follow hard after him; peace with God, joy in believing, ſuch ſouls have formerly obtained; can they live without them now, in their ordinary walking? Can they chooſe but cry out with Job, *O that it were with us, as in former days, when the candle of the Lord was upon our tabernacle*, chap. xxix. 2, 3, 4. and with David, *O Lord, reſtore unto me the joy of thy ſalvation*, Pſal. li. 12. For, Oh! my God, I remember former enjoyments, and *my ſoul is caſt down within me*, Pſal. xlii. 6. They cannot live without it. But ſuppoſe they might make a ſorry ſhift to paſs on in their pilgrimage, whilſt all is ſmooth about them; what will they do in the time of outward trials and diſtreſſes, when deep calleth unto deep, and one trouble excites and ſharpens another? Nothing then will ſupport them, they know, but that which is wanting to them, as Hab. iii. 17, 18. Pſal. xxiii. 4. ſo that the greatneſs of their concernment, provokes them to the earneſtneſs mentioned.

Secondly, They have a deep ſenſe of theſe their great concernments. All men are equally concerned in the love of God, and pardon of ſin. Every one hath a ſoul of the ſame immortal conſtitution, equally capable of bliſs and wo; but yet we ſee that moſt men are ſo ſtupidly ſottiſh, that they take little notice of theſe things. Neither the guilt of ſin, nor the wrath of God, nor death, nor hell, are thought on, or eſteemed by them; they are their concernments, but they are not ſenſible of them. But gracious ſouls have a quick living ſenſe of ſpiritual things. For,

1*ſt*, They having a ſaving ſpiritual light, whereby they are able to diſcern the true nature of ſin, and the terror of the Lord. For though they are now ſuppoſed to have loſt the comforting light of the Spirit, yet they never loſe the ſanctifying light of the Spirit, the light whereby they are enabled to diſcern ſpiritual things in a ſpiritual manner, this never utterly departs from them: By this they ſee ſin *to be exceeding ſinful*, Rom. vii. 13. by this they *know the terror of the Lord*, 2 Cor.

xv. 11. and that it is *a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*, Heb. x. 13. By this they diſcover the excellency of the love of God in Chriſt, which paſſeth knowledge, the preſent ſenſe whereof they have loſt. By this they are enabled to look within the vail, and to take a view of the bleſſed conſolations which the ſaints enjoy, whoſe communion with God was never interrupted: This repreſents to them all the ſweetneſs, pleaſure, joy, peace, which in former days they had, whilſt God was preſent with them in love: By this, are they taught to value all the fruits of the blood of Jeſus Chriſt, of the enjoyment of many bleſſings, whereof they are at preſent cut ſhort and deprived. All which, with other things of the like nature and importance, make them very ſenſible of their concernments.

2*dly*, They remember what it coſt them formerly to deal with God about ſin; and hence they know it is no ordinary matter they have in hand: They muſt again to their old work; take the old cup into their hands again. A recovery from depths is as a new converſion. Oft-times in it, the whole work, as to the ſoul's apprehenſion is gone over afreſh. This the ſoul knows to have been a work of dread, terror, and trouble, and trembles in itſelf at its new trials. And,

3*dly*, The Holy Ghoſt gives unto poor ſouls, a freſh ſenſe of their deep concernments, on purpoſe that it may be a means to ſtir them up unto theſe earneſt applications unto God. The whole work is his, and he carries it on, by means ſuited to the compaſſing of the end he aimeth at; and by theſe means is a gracious ſoul brought into the frame mentioned. Now there are ſundry things that concur in and unto this frame.

Firſt, There is a continual thoughtfulneſs about the ſad condition wherein the ſoul is in its depths. Being deeply affected with their condition, they are continually ruminating upon it, and pondering it in their minds. So David declares the caſe to have been with him, Pſal. xxxviii. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. *Thine arrows ſtick faſt in me, and*

and thy hand presseth me sore; there is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin; for mine iniquities are gone over mine head, as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness. I am troubled, I am bowed down, I go mourning all the day long. I am feeble and sore broken, I have roared for the disquietness of my heart. Restlesness, deep thoughtfulness, disquietness of heart, continual heaviness of heart, sorrow and anxiety of mind, ly at the bottom of the applications we speak of. From these principles their prayers flow out, as David adds, ver. 9. *Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee.* This way all his troubles wrought; he prayed out of the abundance of his meditation and grief. Thoughts of their own state and condition ly down with such persons and rise with them; and accompany them all the day long. As Reuben cried, *The child is not, and I, whether shall I go?* So doth a soul; the love of God is not, Christ is not, and I, whither shall I cause my sorrow to go? God is provoked, death is nigh at hand, relief is far away, darkness is about me; I have lost my peace, my joy, my song in the night; what do I think of duties? Can two walk except they be agreed? Can I walk with God in them, whilst I have thus made him mine enemy? What do I think of ordinances? Will it do me good to be at Jerusalem, and not see the face of the king; to live under ordinances, and not to meet in them with the king of saints? May I not justly fear, that the Lord will take his holy Spirit from me, until I be left without remedy? With such thoughts as these are sin-intangled souls exercised, and they ly rolling in their minds, in all their applications unto God.

Secondly, We see the application itself consists in, and is made by the prayer of faith, or crying unto God: Now, this is done with intenseness of mind; which hath a twofold fruit or propriety, 1*st*, Importunity, and 2*d*, Constancy,

It is said of our blessed Saviour, that when he was in his

his depths, about our ſins, that he offered up *prayers and ſupplications with ſtrong cries and tears*, Heb. v. 7. Strong cries and tears expreſs the utmoſt intenſion of ſpirit. And David expreſſeth it by roaring, as we have ſeen before; as alſo by ſighing, groaning, and panting. A ſoul in ſuch a condition lies down before the Lord, with ſighs, groans, mourning, cries, tears, and roaring according to the various working of his heart, and its being affected with the things that it hath to do; and this produceth:

1ſt, Importunity. The power of the importunity of faith our Saviour hath marvellouſly ſet out, Luke xi. 8, 9, 10. as alſo, chap. xviii. 1. importunate prayer is certainly prevailing: And importunity is as it were made up of two things; frequency of interpoſition, and variety of arguings. You ſhall have a man that is importunate, come unto you ſeven times a day about the ſame buſineſs; and after all, if any new thought come into his mind, though he had reſolved to the contrary, he will come again; and there is nothing than can be imagined to relate unto the buſineſs he hath in hand, but he will make uſe of it, and turn it to the furtherance of his plea. So it is in this caſe. Men will uſe both frequency of interpoſition, and variety of arguings, Pſal. lxxxvi. 1. *I cry unto thee daily*, or rather, *all the day* He had but that one buſineſs, and he attended it to the purpoſe. By this means we *give God no reſt*, Iſa. lxii. 7. which is the very character of importunity. Such ſouls go to God; and they are not ſatisfied with what they have done, and they go again; and ſomewhat abideth ſtill with them, and they go to him again; and the heart is not yet emptied, they will go again to him, that he may have no reſt. What variety of arguments are pleaded with God in this caſe, I could manifeſt in the ſame David. But it is known to all, there is not any thing almoſt that he makes not a plea of; the faithfulneſs, righteouſneſs, name, mercy, goodneſs, and kindneſs of God in Jeſus Chriſt; the concernment of others in him, both the friends and foes of God; his own weakneſs

weakneſs and helpleſneſs, yea, the greatneſs of ſin itſelf, *Be merciful to my ſin*, ſaith he, *for it is great.* Sometimes he begins with ſome arguments of this kind; and then, being a little diverted by other conſiderations, ſome new plea is ſuggeſted unto him by the Spirit, and he returns immediately to his firſt employment and deſign, all arguing great intenſion of mind and ſpirit.

2*dly*, Conſtancy alſo flows from intenſeneſs. Such a ſoul will not give over, until it obtain what it aims at, and looks for, as we ſhall ſee in our proceſs in opening this pſalm.

And this is in general the deportment of a gracious ſoul in the condition here repreſented unto us. As poor creatures love their peace, as they love their ſouls, as they tender the glory of God, they are not to be wanting in this duty. What is the reaſon that controverſies hang ſo long between God and your ſouls, that it may be, you ſcarce ſee a good day all your lives? Is it not for the moſt part from your ſloth and deſpondency of ſpirit? you will not gird up the loins of your minds, in dealing with God to put them to a ſpeedy iſſue in the blood of Chriſt. You go on and off, begin and ceaſe, try and give over; and, for the moſt part, though your caſe be extraordinary, content yourſelves with ordinary and cuſtomary applications unto God. This makes you wither, become uſeleſs, and pine away in and under your perplexities. David did not ſo; but after many any many a breach made by ſin, yet thro' quick, vigorous, reſtleſs actings of faith, all was repaired, ſo that he lived peaceably and died triumphantly. Up, then, and be doing: let not your wounds corrupt becauſe of your folly; make thorough-work of that which lies before you; be it long or difficult, it is all one, it muſt be done, and is attended with ſafety; what you are like to meet withal in the firſt place, ſhall next be declared.

VERSE III.

The Words of the Verſe explained, and their Meaning opened.

THE general frame of a gracious ſoul in its perplexities about ſin, hath been declared. Its particular actings, what it doth, what it meets withal are next repreſented unto us.

Firſt, Then, in particular, it cries out, *If thou, Lord, ſhouldſt mark iniquities. O Lord who ſhall ſtand?*

There is in the words a ſuppoſition, and an inference on that ſuppoſition. In the ſuppoſition; there is, 1*ſt*, The name of God that is fixed on, as ſuited unto it. And, 2*dly*, The thing itſelf ſuppoſed. In the inference, there is expreſſed the matter of it, to *ſtand*, and the manner of its propoſal; whereof two things occur, 1. That it is expreſſed by way of interrogation. 2. The indefiniteneſs of that interrogation, *Who ſhall ſtand?*

If thou, Lord; He here fixes on another name of God, which is JAH. A name, though from the ſame root with the former, yet ſeldom uſed, but to intimate and expreſs the terrible majeſty of God. *He rideth on the heavens, and is extolled by his name JAH*, Pſal. lxviii. 4. He is to deal now with God about the guilt of ſin; and God is repreſented to the ſoul as great and terrible; that he may know what to expect and look for, if the matter muſt be tried out according to the demerit of ſin.

What then ſaith he to *Jah?* in the Heb. *If thou ſhouldſt mark iniquities*, is to obſerve and keep, as in ſafe cuſtody. To keep, preſerve, and watch diligently. So to remark and obſerve, as to retain that which is obſerved, to ponder it and lay it up in the heart, Gen. xxxvii. 11. Jacob *obſerved* Joſeph's dream; that

is,

is, he retained the memory of it, and pondered it in his heart.

The marking of iniquities then here intended, is God's ſo far conſidering and obſerving of them, as to reſerve them for puniſhment and vengeance. In oppoſition unto this marking, he is ſaid not to ſee ſin, to overlook it, to cover it, to forget it, or remember it no more; that is, to forgive it, as the next verſe declares.

I need not ſhew that God ſo far marks all ſins in all perſons, as to ſee them, know them, diſallow them, and to be diſpleaſed with them. This cannot be denyed, without taking away all grounds of fear and worſhip. To deny it, is all one as to deny the very being of God; deny his holineſs and righteouſneſs, and you deny his exiſtence. But there is a day appointed, wherein all the men of the world ſhall know, that God knew and took notice of all and every one of their moſt ſecret ſins. There is then a double marking of ſin in God, neither of which can be denyed in reference unto any ſins, in any perſons. The firſt is phyſical, conſiſting in his omniſcience, whereunto all things are open and naked. Thus no ſin is hid from him; the ſecreteſt are before the light of his countenance. All are marked by him. 2*dly*, Moral; in a diſpliciency with, or diſpleaſure againſt every ſin, which is inſeparable from the nature of God, upon the account of his holineſs. And this is declared in the ſentence of the law, and that equally to all men in the world; but the marking here intended, is that which has a tendency to animadverſion and puniſhment according to the tenor of the law. Not only the ſentence of the law, but a will of puniſhing according to it, is included in it. "If," ſaith the pſalmiſt, "thou the great and dreadful God, who art ex-"tolled by the glorious name JAH, ſhouldſt take notice "of iniquities, ſo as to recompenſe ſinners that come "unto thee according to the ſeverity and exigence of "thy holy law." What then? It is anſwered by the matter of the propoſal, *Who can ſtand?* That is, none can ſo do; τὸ γαρ τίς ἐνταῦθεν ἀθρόας ἔστιν, ſays Chyrſoſtom; This

who is *none*. No man; not one in the world. *Quis stabit* or *consistet*, who can stand, or abide and endure the trial? Every one, on this supposition, must perish, and that eternally. This the desert of sin, and the curse of the law, which is the rule of this marking of their iniquity, doth require. And there is a notable emphasis in the interrogation, which contains the manner of the inference. *Who can stand?* is more than if he had said, None can abide the trial, and escape without everlasting ruin. For the interrogation is indefinite; not, how can I? but, who can stand? When the Holy Ghost would set out the certainty, and dreadfulness of the perishing of ungodly men, he doth it by such a kind of expression, wherein there is a deeper sense intimated into the minds of men, than any words can well clothe or declare, 1 Pet. iv. 17. *What shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel?* and ver. 18. *Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* So here: *Who can stand?* there is a deep insinuation of a dreadful ruin, as unto all, with whom God shall so deal, as to mark their iniquities. See Psal. i. 5.

The psalmist then addressing himself to deal with God about sin, lays down, in the first place, in the general, how things must go, not with himself only, but with all the world, upon the supposition he had fixed. This is not my case only, but it is so with all mankind, every one who is partaker of flesh and blood; whether their guilt answer that which I am oppressed withal or no, all is one; guilty they are all, and all must perish: How much more must that needs be my condition, who have contracted so great a guilt as I have done. Here then he lays a great argument against himself on the supposition before laid down. If none, the holiest, the humblest, the most believing soul, can abide the trial, can endure; how much less can I, who am the chiefest of sinners, the least of saints, who come unspeakably behind them in holiness, and have equally gone beyond them in sin?

This is the sense and importance of the words. Let us

us now conſider how they are expreſſive of the actings of the ſoul, whoſe ſtate and condition is here repreſented unto us, and what directions they will afford unto us, to give unto them who are fallen into the ſame ſtate.

What firſt preſents itſelf to a ſoul in diſtreſs on the account of ſin.----This opened in four propoſitions. ----Thoughts of God's marking ſin, according to the tenor of the law, full of dread and terror.

What depths the pſalmiſt was in, hath been declared; in them, what reſolution he takes upon himſelf to ſeek God alone for relief and recovery, hath been alſo ſhewed; and what earneſtneſs in general he uſeth therein; addreſſing himſelf unto God in that frame, with that purpoſe and reſolution; the firſt thing he fixeth on in particular is the greatneſs of his ſin and guilt according to the tenor of the law. In appears then, that,

Firſt, In a ſin-perplexed ſoul's addreſſes unto God, the firſt thing that preſents itſelf unto him, is God's marking ſin according to the tenor of the law. The caſe is the ſame in this matter with all ſorts of ſinners; whether before converſion, or in relapſes and entanglements after converſion. There is a proportion between converſion and recoveries. They are brought by the ſame means and ways; and have both the ſame effects upon the ſouls of ſinners, although in ſundry things they differ, not now to be ſpoken unto. What then is ſpoken on this head, may be applied unto both ſorts; to them that are yet unconverted, and to them who are really delivered from their ſtate and condition; but eſpecially unto thoſe who know not whether ſtate they belong unto, that is to all guilty ſouls. The law will put in its claim to all. It will condemn the ſin, and try what it can do againſt the ſinner. There is no ſhaking of it off; it muſt be fairly anſwered, or it will prevail. The law iſſues out an arreſt for the debt; and it is to no purpoſe to bid the ſearjeant begone, or to entreat him

to

to ſpare. If payment be not procured, and an acquaintance produced, the ſoul muſt to priſon. I am going unto God, ſaith the ſoul; he is great and terrible, a marker of ſin, and what ſhall I ſay unto him? This makes him tremble, and cry out, *O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?* So that it appears hence, that,

Secondly, Serious thoughts of God's marking ſin according to the tenor of the law, is a thing full of dread and terror to the ſoul of a ſinner. But this is not all; he is ſwallowed up in this amazement, crying out only, *Who can ſtand?* There is included in the words, a thorough ſincere acknowledgment of his own ſin and the guilt thereof. Mentioning the deſert of ſin, in his own caſe, he acknowledgeth his own. So that,

Thirdly, Sincere ſenſe and acknowledgement for ſin, with ſelf-condemnation in the juſtification of God, is the firſt peculiar eſpecial working of a gracious ſoul riſing out of its intanglements. All this is included in theſe words; he acknowledgeth both his own guilt, and the righteouſneſs of God, if he ſhould deal with him according to the demerit of ſin.

And theſe things ly in the words abſolutely conſidered; but the ſtate of the ſoul here repreſented, carries us on farther. He reſts not here, as we ſhall ſee in the opening of the next verſe, the chief thing aimed at in the whole. And, as a tranſition from the one to the other, that we may ſtill carry on the general deſign at the entrance laid down, we muſt take along with us this farther obſervation,

Fourthly, Though ſelf-condemnation be an eminent preparation for the diſcovery of forgiveneſs in God, yet a poor diſtreſſed ſoul is not to reſt in it, nor to reſt upon it, but to paſs on to the embracing of forgiveneſs itſelf.

There is yet a general propoſition lying in the words, that we may make uſe of in our paſſage; and it is this, God's marking of iniquities, and man's ſalvation are everlaſtingly inconſiſtent. I mean his marking them in the perſons of ſinners, for the ends before mentioned.

Of

Of ſome of theſe I ſhall farther treat, according as the handling of them conduceth to the purpoſe in hand.

That which I ſhall begin withal, is that which was firſt laid down about the effects of ſerious thoughts, concerning God's marking ſin according to the tenor of the law; which, as I ſaid, is the firſt thing that preſents itſelf unto a ſin-intangled ſoul in its addreſſes unto God.

But this ſhall not paſs alone. I ſhall draw the two firſt obſervations into one, and make uſe of the firſt only in the confirmation of the other; which will expreſs the ſenſe of the words abſolutely conſidered. The third and fourth will lead us on in the progreſs of the ſoul, towards the relief ſought after and propoſed. That therefore which is to be firſt inſiſted on, comes up to this propoſition.

In a ſin-perplexed ſoul's addreſſes unto God, the firſt thing that preſents itſelf unto him, is, God's marking of ſin according to the tenor of the law, which of itſelf is apt to fill the ſoul with dread and terror.

I ſhall firſt ſomewhat ſpeak unto it in this; as conſidering in itſelf, and then enquire into the concernment of the ſoul in it, whoſe condition is here deſcribed.

The Lord ſpeaks of ſome, who when they hear the words of the curſe, yet bleſs themſelves, and ſay they ſhall have peace, Deut. xxix. 19. Let men preach and ſay what they will of the terror of the Lord, they will deſpiſe it, which God threatens with utter exterminati-on: And he notes it again, as an amazing wickedneſs, and the height of obdurateneſs, Jer. xxxvi. 24. generally it is with ſinners, as it was with Gaal the ſon of Ebed, Judges ix. when he was fortifying of Shechem againſt Abimelech; Zebul tells him that Abimelech will come and deſtroy him: Let him come, ſaith Gaal, I ſhall deal well enough with him, let him bring forth his army, I fear him not; but upon the very firſt appearance of Abimelech's army, he trembleth for fear, ver. 36.

36. Tell obdurate ſinners of the wrath of God, and that he will come to plead his cauſe againſt them; for the moſt part they take no notice of what you ſay, nor have any ſerious thoughts about it; but go on, as if they were reſolved they ſhould deal well enough with him. Notwithſtanding all their ſtoutneſs, a day is coming, wherein fearfulneſs ſhall ſurpriſe them, and make them cry out, *Who among ſt us ſhall dwell with devouring fire? Who among ſt us ſhall inhabit with everlaſting burnings?* Yea, if the Lord be pleaſed in this life, in an eſpecial manner, to draw nigh to any of them, they quickly ſee, that their *hearts cannot endure, nor can their hands be ſtrong*, Ezek. xxii. 14. Their hands hang down, and their ſtout hearts tremble like an aſpen-leaf.

He who firſt ſinned, and had firſt occaſion to have ſerious thoughts about God's marking of ſin, gives us a notable inſtance of what we have affirmed. And the firſt in every kind, is the meaſure of all that follows in the ſame kind, Gen. iii. 8. *He heard the voice of God;* ſo he had done before, without the leaſt trouble or conſternation of ſpirit: He was made for communion with God; and that he might hear his voice was part of his bleſſedneſs. But now, ſaith he, *I heard thy voice and was afraid, and hid myſelf.* He knew that God was coming in the inqueſt of ſin, and he was not able to bear the thoughts of meeting him; could he have gone into the bowels of the earth from whence he was taken, and have been there hid from God, he would not have failed to have attempted it. Things are now altered with him; in that God whom he loved before, as good, holy, powerful, righteous creator, preſerver and benefactor and rewarder, he ſaw nothing now, but wrath, indignation, vengeance and terror. This makes him tremble out theſe dreadful words, *I heard thy voice, and was afraid, and hid myſelf.*

The giving of the law afterwards, evinces what effects the conſideration of God's proceeding with ſinners, according to the tenor of it, muſt needs produce, Exod. xx. 18, 19. *All the people ſaw the thundering and the lightnings,*

lightnings, and the voice of the trumpet, and the mountain ſmoking, as the apoſtle alſo deſcribes it, Heb. xii. 18. In this manner came forth from the Lord that fiery law, Deut. xxxiii. 2. So that all who are concerned in it, did exceedingly fear and tremble. And yet all this reſpects but the ſeverity of the law in general. There is a ſolemnity, that carrieth an awe with it, in the preparation of an aſſize, to be kept and held by poor worms like ourſelves; but the dread of it, is peculiar to the malefactors, for whoſe trial and execution all this preparation is made. When a ſoul comes to think that all this dreadful preparation, this appearance of terrible majeſty, theſe ſtreams of the fiery law, are all pointed towards him, it will make him cry out, *Lord, who can ſtand?* And this law is ſtill in force towards ſinners, even as it was on the day wherein it was given on mount Sinai. Though Moſes grew old, yet his ſtrength never failed; nor hath his law, the law given by him, loſt any thing of its ſtrength, power, or authority towards ſinners. It is ſtill accompanied with thunderings and lightnings as of old; and it will not fail to repreſent the terror of the Lord to a guilty ſoul.

Among the ſaints themſelves, I could produce inſtances to manifeſt that they have found it to be thus. The caſes of Job, David, Heman are known; I ſhall only conſider it in Chriſt himſelf. From himſelf he had no occaſion of any diſcouraging thought; being holy, harmleſs, undefiled. He fulfilled all righteouſneſs, did his Father's will in all things, and abode in his love. This muſt needs be attended with the higheſt peace and moſt bleſſed joy. In the very entrance of his trials, he had a full perſuaſion of a comfortable iſſue and ſucceſs; as we may ſee, Iſa. l. 7, 8. But yet when his ſoul was exerciſed with thoughts of God's marking our iniquities upon him, it was ſorrowful unto the death. He was *amazed, and very heavy*, Mark xiv. 33. His agony, his bloody ſweat, his ſtrong cries and ſupplications, his reiterated prayers, *If it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me*, his laſt and dreadful cry, *My God, my God, why*

haſt thou forſaken me? All manifeſt what apprehenſions he had, of what it was for God to mark iniquities. Well may poor ſinners cry out, *Lord, who ſhall ſtand?* When the Son of God himſelf ſo trembled under the weight of it.

In ſerious thoughts of God marking ſin, he is repreſented unto the ſoul under all thoſe glorious terrible attributes and excellencies which are apt to beget a dread and terror in the hearts of ſinners, when they have no relief from any covenant-engagements in Chriſt. The ſoul looks upon him as the great lawgiver, James iv. 12. able to revenge the breach of it, by deſtroying body and ſoul in hell-fire, as one terrible in holineſs, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; ſo alſo in greatneſs and in power; the living God, into whoſe hands it is a fearful thing to fall; as attended with vindictive juſtice, ſaying, *Vengeance is mine, and I will recompenſe,* Heb. x. 30. Now, for a ſoul to conſider God, cloathed with all theſe dreadful and terrible excellencies, coming to deal with ſinners according to the tenor of his fiery law, it cannot but make them cry out with Moſes, *I exceedingly quake and tremble.*

Theſe things work on their minds the concluſion mentioned before, is aſſerted in theſe words; namely, that God's marking of ſin according to the tenor of the law, and man's ſalvation, utterly inconſiſtent; a concluſion, that muſt needs ſhake a ſoul, when preſſed under a ſenſe of its own guilt.

When a perſon who is really guilty, and knows himſelf to be guilty, is brought unto his trial, he hath but theſe four grounds of hope that his ſafety and his trial may be conſiſtent. He may think that either, *Firſt,* The judge will not be able to find out or diſcover his crimes; or, *Secondly.* That ſome one will powerfully intercede for him with the judge; or, *Thirdly,* That the rule of the law is not ſo ſtrict as to take notice of his miſcarriages; or, *Fourthly,* That the penalty of it is not ſo ſevere, but that there may be a way of eſcape. Cut him ſhort of his expectations from ſome, one, or all of theſe, and

and all his hopes muſt of neceſſity periſh. And how is it in this caſe?

Firſt, Of the judge, we have ſpoken ſomewhat already. The preſent enquiry is, Whether any thing may be hid from him or no, and ſo a door of eſcape be opened to a ſinner? The apoſtle tells us, *That all things are open and naked unto him*, Heb. iv. 12. and the pſalmiſt, that there *is not a thought in our hearts, nor a word in our tongue, but he underſtandeth it afar off, and knoweth it altogether*, Pſal. cxxxix. 2, 4. What the ſinner knows of himſelf, that may cauſe him to fear, that God knows alſo; *He is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things*, 1 John iii. 20. When God ſhall not only ſet in order before the ſinner the ſecret ſins, which he retains ſome remembrance of; but alſo brings to mind and repreſents to him, that world of filth and folly, which either he never took any real notice of, or hath utterly forgotten, it will trouble him, yea, confound him.

Secondly, But may not this judge be intreated to paſs by what he knows, and to deal favourably with the ſinner? May not an interceſſor be obtained to plead in behalf of the guilty ſoul? Eli determines this matter, 1 Sam. ii. 25 *If one man ſin againſt another, the judge ſhall judge him; but if a man ſin againſt the Lord, who ſhall intreat for him?* There is not, ſaith Job, between us, one that might argue the caſe, in pleading for me, and ſo make up the matter, *laying his hand upon us both*, Job ix. 33. We now conſider a ſinner purely under the adminiſtration of the law, which knows nothing of a Mediator. In that caſe, who ſhall take upon him to intercede for a ſinner? Beſides, that all creatures in heaven and earth, are engaged in the quarrel of God againſt ſinners; and beſides the greatneſs and terror of his majeſty, that will certainly deter all or any of them from undertaking any ſuch work; what is the requeſt that in this caſe muſt be put up unto God? Is it not, that he would ceaſe to be holy, leave off from being righteous, relinquiſh his throne, deny himſelf, and his

ſovereignty, that a rebel, a traitor, his curſed enemy, may live and eſcape his juſtice: Is this requeſt reaſonable? Is he fit to intercede for ſinners that makes it? Would he not by ſo doing prove himſelf to be the greateſt of them? The ſinner cannot then expect any door of eſcape to be opened unto him? All the world is againſt him; and the caſe muſt be tried out nakedly between God and him: But,

Thirdly, It may be the rule of the law, whereby the ſinner is to be tried, is not ſo ſtrict, but that in caſe of ſuch ſins as he is guilty of, it may admit of a favourable interpretation; or that the good that he hath done, may be laid in the balance againſt his evil, and ſo ſome relief be obtained that way. But the matter is quite otherwiſe; there is no good action of a ſinner, though it were perfectly good, that can ly in the balance with, or compenſate the evil of, the leaſt ſin committed: For all good is due on another account, though no guilt were incurred. And the payment of money that a man owes, that he hath borrowed, makes no ſatisfaction for what he hath ſtole; no more will our duties compenſate for our ſins. Nor is there any good action of a ſinner, but it hath evil and guilt enough attending it, to render it unacceptable; ſo that men may well ceaſe from thoughts of their ſupererogation. Beſides, where there is any one ſin, if all the good in the world might be ſuppoſed to be in the ſame perſon, yet in the indiſpenſible order of our dependance on God, nothing of that good could come into conſideration, until the guilt of that ſin were anſwered for unto the utmoſt. Now, the penalty of every ſin, being the eternal ruin of the ſinner, all his ſuppoſed good can ſtand him in little ſtead. And for the law itſelf, it is an iſſue of the holineſs, righteouſneſs, and wiſdom of God; ſo that there is not any evil, ſo great or ſmall, but is forbidden in it, and condemned by it. Hereupon David ſo ſtates this whole matter, Pſal. cxliii. 2. *Enter not into judgment with thy ſervant, for in thy ſight ſhall no man living be juſtified.* That is, if things are to be tried out and determined

termined by the law, no ſinner can obtain acquitment; as Paul declares the ſenſe of that place to be, Rom. iii. 20. Gal. ii. 16. But yet,

Fourthly, It may be the ſentence of the law is not ſo fierce and dreadful, but that though guilt be found, there may be yet a way of eſcape. But the law ſpeaks not one word on this ſide death to an offender. There is a greatneſs, and an eternity of wrath in the ſentence of it; and it is God himſelf who hath undertaken to ſee the vengeance of it executed. So that on all theſe accounts the concluſion mentioned, muſt needs be fixed in the ſoul of a ſinner, that entertains thoughts of drawing nigh to God.

Though what hath been ſpoken may be of general uſe unto ſinners of all ſorts, whether called home to God, or yet ſtrangers to him; yet I ſhall not inſiſt on any general improvement of it; becauſe it is intended only for one ſpecial end or purpoſe. That which is aimed at, is to ſhew what are the firſt thoughts that ariſe in the heart of a poor intangled ſoul, when firſt he begins to endeavour a recovery in a return unto God. The law immediately puts in its claim unto him, and againſt him. God is repreſented unto him, as angry, diſpleaſed, provoked; and his terror more or leſs beſets him round about. This fills him with fear, ſhame, and confuſion of face; ſo that he knows not what to do. Theſe troubles are greater or leſſer according as God ſeeth it beſt for the poor creature's preſent humiliation, and future ſafety. What then doth the ſinner? What are his thoughts hereupon? Doth he think to fly from God, and to give over all endeavours of recovery? Doth he ſay, This God is a holy and terrible God, I cannot ſerve him, it is to no purpoſe for me to look for any thing but fury and deſtruction from him? And therefore I had as good give over, as perſiſt in my deſign, of drawing nigh to him? It cannot be denied, but that, in this caſe, thoughts of this nature will be ſuggeſted by unbelief; and that ſometimes great perplexities ariſe to the ſoul by them. But this is not the iſſue

and

and final product of this exercise of the soul; it produceth another effect; it calls for that which is the first particular working of a gracious soul arising out of its sin-intanglements. This is, as was declared, a sincere sense of sin, and acknowledgment of it, with self-condemnation in the justification of God: This is the first thing that a soul, endeavouring a recovery from its depths, is brought and wrought unto. His general resolution to make serious and thorough work, with what he hath in hand, was before unfolded. That which, in the next place, we are directed unto in these words, as the reflection on its self, upon the consideration of God's marking iniquity, now mentioned. This is faith's great and proper use of the law; the nature whereof shall be farther opened in the next discourse.

The first particular actings of a soul towards a recovery out of the depths of sin.----Sense of sin, wherein it consists.---How it is wrought.----Acknowledgment of sin; its nature and properties.----Self-condemnation.

What is the frame of the soul in general, that is excited by grace, and resolves in the strength thereof to attempt a recovery out of the depths of sin-intanglements, hath been declared. We have also shewed what entertainments, in general, such a soul had need to expect, yea, ordinarily shall be sure to meet withal. It may be he goes forth at first like Sampson, with his locks cut, and thinks he will do as at other times; but he quickly finds his peace lost, his wounds painful, his conscience restless, God displeased, and his whole condition, as the utmost of his own apprehension, hazardous. This fills him with the thoughts expressed in this third verse, and fixes the conclusion in his mind, discoursed of before. He finds now, that he hath the law afresh to deal withal; thence ariseth that sense and acknowledgment of sin, that self-condemnation, in the justification of God, whereof we now speak. He grows

not

not ſullen, ſtubborn, diſpleaſed, or for the extenuation of his ſin and guilt, he quarrelleth not with, he repineth not againſt, the holineſs, ſeverity, and righteouſneſs of the law of God; but reflects wholly on himſelf, his own unworthineſs, guilt, and deſert; and in a ſenſe of them, lies down at the foot of God, in expectation of his word and ſentence.

Three things in this condition we aſcribe unto ſuch a ſoul.

First, A ſincere ſenſe of ſin. There is a twofold ſenſe of ſin: The one is general and notional; whereby a man knows what ſin is; that himſelf is a ſinner, that he is guilty of this or that, theſe or thoſe ſins; only his heart is not affected proportionably to that diſcovery and knowledge which he hath of theſe things: The other is active and efficacious. The ſoul being acquainted with the nature of ſin, with its own guilt in reference unto ſin in general, as alſo to this or that ſin, is univerſally influenced by that apprehenſion unto ſuitable affections and operations.

Of both theſe we have an inſtance in the ſame perſon. David, before Nathan's coming to him, had the former, afterwards he had the latter alſo. It cannot be imagined, but that before the coming of the prophet, he had a general knowledge and ſenſe, not only abſolutely of the nature of ſin; but alſo, that himſelf was a ſinner, and guilty of thoſe very ſins, which afterwards he was reproved for. To think otherwiſe, is to ſuppoſe, not only that he was un-ſainted, but un-manned alſo, and turned into a beaſt. But yet this wrought not in him any one affection ſuitable to his condition; and the like may be ſaid of moſt ſinners in the world. But now when Nathan comes to him, and gives him the latter efficacious ſenſe, whereof we ſpeak, we know what effects it did produce.

It is the latter only that is under conſideration; and that alſo is twofold; 1. Legal or antecedaneous unto converſion. 2. Evangelical, and previous to the recovery

very from depths, whereof we treat. How theſe two differ, and how they may be diſcerned one from the other, being both of them in their kind ſincere is not my buſineſs to declare.

Now this laſt, which we aſſign as the firſt duty, work, or acting of a returning ſoul, is a deep and practical apprehenſion wrought in the mind and heart of a believing ſinner by the Holy Ghoſt, of ſin and its evils, in reference unto the law, and love of God, the croſs, and blood of Chriſt, the communion, and conſolation of the Spirit, and all the fruits of love, mercy, or grace, that it hath been made partakers of, or on goſpel-ground hoped for.

Firſt, The principal efficient cauſe of it is the Holy Ghoſt. He it is *who convinceth of ſin*, John xvi. 8. He works indeed by means. He wrought it in David by the miniſtry of Nathan, and he wrought it in Peter, by the look of Chriſt. But his work it is. No man can work it upon his own ſoul. It will not ſpring out of men's rational conſiderations. Though men may exerciſe their thoughts about ſuch things, as one would think were enough to break the heart of ſtones, yet if the Holy Ghoſt put not forth a peculiar efficacy of his own, this ſenſe of ſin will not be wrought or produced. As the waters at the pool of Bethesda were not troubled, but when an angel deſcended and moved them, no more will the heart for ſin, without a ſaving illapſe of the Holy Ghoſt.

Secondly, It is a deep apprehenſion of ſin, and the evils of it. Slight tranſient thoughts about them, amount not to the ſenſe of which we ſpeak. *My ſorrow* ſaith David, *is continually before me*, Pſal. xxxviii. 17. It preſſed him always, and greatly. Hence he compares this ſenſe of ſin, wrought by the Holy Ghoſt, to *arrows that ſtick in the fleſh*, ver. 2. They pain ſorely, and are always perplexing. Sin, in this ſenſe of it, lays hold on the ſoul, ſo that the ſinner cannot *look up*, Pſal. xl. 12. And it abides with him, making *his ſore run in the night, without ceaſing*, Pſal. lxxvii. 2. and de-

priveth

priveth the soul of rest. *My soul*, saith he, *refused to be comforted*. This apprehension of sin, lies down, and rises with him in whom it is. Transient thoughts attended with infrequent sighs and ejaculations, little become a returning soul. And,

Thirdly, It is practical. It is not seated only in the speculative part of the mind, hovering in general notions; but it dwells in the practical understanding, which effectually influenceth the will and affections. Such an apprehension, as from which sorrow and humiliation are inseparable. The acts of the practical understanding, do so necessarily produce, together with them, suitable acts of the will and affections, that some have concluded, that those are indeed proper acts of the will, which are usually ascribed to the understanding. It is so in the mind, as that the whole soul is cast into the mould and likeness of it, humiliation, sorrow, self-abhorrency, do live and die with it.

Fourthly, It hath, in the first place, respect unto the law of God. There can be no due consideration of sin, wherein the law hath not its place. The law calls for the sinner, and he willingly gives up his sin to be judged by it. There he sees it to be *exceeding sinful*, Rom. vii. 17. Though a believer be less under the power of the law than others, yet he knows more of the authority and nature of it than others. He sees more of its spirituality and holiness. And the more a man sees of the excellency of the law, the more he sees of the vileness of sin. This is done by a soul in its first endeavour of a recovery from the entanglements of sin. He labours thoroughly to know his disease, that he may be cured. It will do him no good, he knows, to be ignorant of his distemper or his danger. He knows that if his wounds be not searched to the bottom, they will stink and be corrupt. To the law then he brings himself and his sin. By that, he sees the vileness of the one, and the danger of the other. Most men ly still in their depths, because they would willingly escape the first step of their rising. From the bottom of their mi-

ſery, they would fain at once be at the top of their felicity. The ſoul, managed in this work by the Holy Ghoſt, doth not ſo. He converſeth with the law; brings his ſin unto it. And fully hears the ſentence of it. When the ſin is thoroughly condemned, then he farther takes care of the ſinner. As ever you deſire to come to reſt, avoid not this entrance of your paſſion unto it. Weigh it well, and attend unto what the law ſpeaks of your ſin, and its deſert, or you will never make a due application to God for forgiveneſs. As ever you would have your ſouls juſtified by grace, take care to have your ſins judged by the law.

Secondly, There is a reſpect in it to the love of God. And this breaks the heart of the poor returning ſinner. Sorrow from the law ſhuts itſelf up in the ſoul, and ſtrangleth it. Sorrow from the thoughts of the love of God opens it, and cauſeth it to flow forth. Thoughts of ſinning againſt the love of God, managed by the Holy Ghoſt, what ſhall I ſay? their effects in the heart are not to be expreſſed. This made Ezra cry out, *O my God I bluſh, and am aſhamed to lift up my face to thee*, chap. ix. 6. and ver. 10. *What ſhall we ſay after this?* After what? why, all the fruits of love and kindneſs they had been made partakers of. Thoughts of love and ſin laid together, make the ſoul bluſh, mourn, be aſhamed and confounded in itſelf. So Ezek. xxxvi. 31. *Then ſhall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good;* When ſhall they do ſo? when thoughts and apprehenſions of love ſhall be brought home to them; and, ſaith he, then *ſhall you loath your-ſelves in your own ſight.* The ſoul now calls to mind, what love, what kindneſs, what mercy, what grace, what patience hath been exerciſed towards it, and whereof it hath been made partaker. The thoughts of all theſe now come in upon him as ſtreams of water. Such mercy, ſuch communion, ſuch privileges, ſuch hopes of glory, ſuch taſtes of heaven, ſuch peace, ſuch conſolation, ſuch joy, ſuch communications of the ſpirit, all to a poor, wretched, curſed, loſt, forlorn ſinner; and

and all this despised, neglected, the God of them all provoked, forsaken. Ah! saith the soul, whither shall I cause my sorrow to go? This fills him with shame and confusion of face, makes him mourn in secret, and sigh to the breaking of the loins: And then,

Thirdly, The blood and cross of Christ is also brought to remembrance by the Holy Ghost. Ah! saith the soul, have I thus requited the wonderful astonishing love of my Redeemer? Is this the return, the requital I have made unto him? Are not heaven and earth astonished at the despising of that love, at which they are astonished? This brake Peter's heart upon the look of Christ. Such words as these from Christ, will, in this condition, sound in the ears of the soul. "Did I love thee, and leave my glory to become "a scorn and reproach for thy sake? Did I not think "my life and all that was dear unto me, too good for "thee, to save thee from the wrath to come? Have I "been a wilderness unto thee, or a land of darkness? "What could I have done more for thee; when I had "nothing left but my life, blood and soul, they went "all for thee, that thou mightest live by my death, be "washed in my blood, and be saved through my souls "being made an offering for thee; And hast thou thus "requited my love? to prefer a lust before me, or by "mere sloth and folly to be turned away from me; go "unkind and unthankful soul, and see if thou canst find "another redeemer." This overwhelms the soul, and even drowns it in tears and sorrow. And then the bitterness also of the sufferings of Christ, are brought to mind. *They look on him whom they have pierced and mourn*, Zech. xii. 10. They remember his gall and wormwood; his cries and tears; his agony and sweet; his desertion and anguish; his blood and death; the sharpness of the sword that was in his soul, and the bitterness of the cup that was put into his hand. Such a soul now looks on Christ, bleeding, dying, wrestling with wrath and curse for him, and seeth his sin in the streams of blood that issued from from his side; and all

this increaſeth that ſenſe of ſin whereof we ſpeak. Alſo,

Fourthly, It relates to the communion and conſolations of the Holy Ghoſt, with all the privileges, and fruits of love we are by him made partakers of. The Spirit is given to believers upon the promiſe of Chriſt to dwell in them. He takes up their hearts to be his dwelling place; to what ends and purpoſes? That he may purify and ſanctify them, make them holy and dedicate them to God; to furniſh them with graces and gifts; to intereſt them in privileges; to guide, lead, direct, comfort them; to ſeal them unto the day of redemption. Now, this Spirit is *grieved by ſin*, Eph. iv. 30. and his *dwelling place defiled thereby*, 1 Cor. vi. 19. and iii. 17. Thoughts hereof greatly ſharpen the ſpiritual ſenſe of ſin in a recovering ſoul. He conſiders what light, what love, what joy, what conſolation, what privileges it hath by him been made partaker of; what motions, warnings, workings, to keep it from ſin, it hath found from him; and ſays within itſelf, "What have I done, "whom have I grieved, whom have I provoked; what "if the Lord ſhould now for my folly and ingratitude "utterly take his Holy Spirit from me? What if I "ſhould have ſo grieved him, that he will dwell in me "no more, delight in me no more? What diſmal dark-"neſs and diſconſolation; yea, what utter ruin ſhould "I be left unto? However, what ſhame and confuſion "of face belongs to me for my wretched diſingenuity, "and ingratitude towards him?"

This is the firſt thing that appears in the returning ſoul's actings and frame; a ſincere ſenſe of ſin on the account mentioned, wrought in it by the Holy Ghoſt. And this a ſoul, in the depths deſcribed, muſt come unto, if ever it expects or looks for deliverance, and a recovery. Let not ſuch perſons expect to have a renewed ſenſe of mercy, without a revived ſenſe of ſin.

Secondly, From hence proceedeth an ingenuous, free, gracious acknowledgment of ſin. Men may have a ſenſe

a ſenſe of ſin, and yet ſuffer it to ly burning as a fire ſhut up in their bones; to their continual diſquietment, and not be able to come off unto a free ſoul-opening acknowledgment. Yea, confeſſion may be made in general, and mention therein of that very ſin wherewith the ſoul is moſt intangled, and yet the ſoul comes ſhort of a due performance of this duty. Conſider how the caſe ſtood with David, Pſal. xxxii. 3. *When I kept ſilence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.* How could David keep ſilence, and yet roar all the day long? What is that ſilence which is conſiſtent with roaring? It is a mere negation of that duty, which is expreſſed, ver. 5. that is intended; *I acknowledged my ſins unto thee, and mine iniquities I have not hid.* It was not a ſilence of ſubmiſſion and waiting on God that he intends; that would not have produced a waſting of his ſpiritual ſtrength, as he complains this ſilence did; *my bones waxed old;* nor yet was it a ſullen, ſtubborn, and contumacious frame that was upon him; but he notes, ſaith Calvin, and he ſays well, *Affectum qui medius eſt inter tolerantiam & contumaciam, vitio & virtuti affinis;* an affection between patience and ſtubborneſs bordering on the one and other: That is, he had a deep ſenſe of ſin; this diſquieted and perplexed him all the day long, which he calls his roaring; it weakened and wearied him, making his bones wax old, or his ſtrength decay; yet was he not able to bring his heart to that ingenuous, gracious acknowledgment, which, like the launcing of a feſtered wound, would have given, at leaſt, ſome eaſe to his ſoul. God's children are oft-times in this matter like ours. Though they are convinced of a fault, and are really troubled at it, yet they will hardly acknowledge it. So do they: They will go up and down, ſigh and mourn, roar all the day long; but an evil and untoward frame of ſpirit, under the power of unbelief and fear keeps them from this duty.

Now, that this acknowledgement may be acceptable unto God, it is required, firſt, that it be free, then that it be full.

Firſt,

First, It must be free and spiritually ingenuous. Cain, Pharaoh, Ahab, Judas, came all to an acknowledgment of sin, but it was whether they would or no; it was pressed out of them, it did not flow from them. The confession of a person under the convincing terrors of the law, or dread of imminent judgments, is like that of malefactors on the rack, who speak out that, for which themselves and friends must die. What they say, though it be the truth, is a fruit of force and torture, not of any ingenuity of mind: So it is with merely convinced persons. They come not to the acknowledgment of sin with any more freedom; and the reason is, because all sin hath shame; and for men to be free unto shame, is naturally impossible, shame being nature's shrinking from its self, and the posture it would appear in. But now the returning soul hath never more freedom, liberty, and aptitude of spirit, than when he is in the acknowledgment of those things whereof he is most ashamed. And this is no small evidence that it proceeds from that Spirit which is attended with that liberty, for *where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty*, 2 Cor. iii. 17. When David was delivered from his silence, he expresseth this frame in the performance of this duty, Psal. xxxii 5. *I acknowledged my sin, and mine iniquities I have not hid; I said, I will confess my transgression.* His mouth is now open, and his heart enlarged; and he multiplies one expression upon another, to manifest his enlargement. So doth a soul rising out of its depths, in the beginning of this address unto God. Having the sense of sin, before described, wrought in him by the Holy Ghost, his heart is made free, and enlarged unto an ingenuous acknowledgment of his sin before the Lord. Herein he pours out his soul unto God; and hath not more freedom in any thing, than in dealing about that, whereof he is most ashamed.

Secondly, Full also it must be. Reserves ruin confession. If the soul have any secret thought, rolling a sweet morsel under its tongue, of a bow in the house of Rimmon, it is like part of the price kept back, which makes

makes the whole robbery, instead of an offering. If there be remaining a bitter root of favouring any one lust or sin, of any occasion of, or temptation unto sin, let a man be as open, free, and earnest as can be imagined in the acknowledgment of all other sins, and evils, the whole duty is rendered abominable. Some persons, when they are brought into depths and anguish about any sin, and are thereon forced to the acknowledgment of it, at the same time they are little concerned with their other follies and iniquities, that, it may be, are no less provoking unto God, than that is, from whence their present trouble doth arise. Let not, as James speaks in another case, *such a man think, that he shall receive any thing from God.* It must be full and comprehensive, as well as free and ingenuous.

And of such importance is the right performance of this duty, that the promise of pardon is oft-times peculiarly annexed unto it, as that which entirely carries along with it the other duties which make up a full returnal unto God, Prov. xxviii. 13. 1 John i. 9. and that place in Job is remarkable, chap. xxxiii. 27, 28. *He looketh upon men, and if any say I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.* He shall not only be made partaker of pardon, but of consolation also, and joy in the light of God's countenance.

Thirdly, There yet remains, self-condemnation with the justification of God, which lies expressly in the word of the verse under consideration, and hereof are two parts.

First, Self-abhorrency or dislike. The soul is now wholly displeased with itself, and reflects upon itself with all affections of regret and trouble. So the apostle declares it to have been with the Corinthians, when their godly sorrow was working in them, 2 Cor. vii. 11. among other things, it wrought in them indignation and revenge; or a reflection on themselves, with all manner of

dislike and abhorrency. In the winding up of the controversy between God and Job, this is the point he rests in. As he had come in general to a free, full, ingenuous acknowledgment of sin, chap. xl. 4, 5. So in particular he gives up his whole contest, in this abhorrency of himself, chap. xlii. 6. *I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* "What a vile wretch-"ed creature have I been, saith the soul, I blush and "am ashamed to think of my folly, baseness, and in-"gratitude, is it possible that I should deal thus with "the Lord? I abhor, I loath myself, I would fly any "where from myself, I am so vile and lothsome; a "thing to be despised of God, angels, and men." And,

Secondly, There is self-judging in it also. This the apostle invites the Corinthians unto, 1 Epist. chap. xi. 31. *If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.* This is a person pronouncing sentence on himself, according to the tenor of the law. The soul brings not only its sin, but itself also to the law. It puts itself, as to merit and desert, under the stroke and severity of it. Hence ariseth a full justification of God, in what sentence soever he shall be pleased to pronounce in the case before him. And these three things, which we have passed through, compose the frame, and first actings of a gracious soul, rising from its depths. They are all of them signally expressed in that place where we have a signal recovery exemplified, Hos. xiv. 1, 2, 3, 4. And this makes way for the exaltation of grace, the great thing in all this dispensation aimed at by God, Eph. i. 6. That which he is now doing, is to bring the soul to glory in him, 1 Cor. i. 31. which is all the return he hath from his large and infinitely bountiful expences of grace and mercy. Now, nothing can render grace conspicuous and glorious, until the soul come to this frame. Grace will not seem high, until the soul be laid very low. And this also suits or prepares the soul for the receiving of mercy, in a sense of pardon, the great thing aimed at on the part of the sinner. And it pre-

pares

pares it for every duty that is incumbent on him in that condition wherein he is. This brings the soul to waiting with diligence and patience. If things presently answer not our expectation, we are ready to think, we have done what we can, if it will be no better, we must bear it as we are able; which frame God abhors. The soul in this frame is contented to wait the pleasure of God, as we shall see in the close of the psalm. Oh! said such an one, if ever I obtain a sense of love, if ever I enjoy one smile of his countenance more, it is of unspeakable grace. Let him take his own time, his own season; it is good for me quietly to wait and to hope for his salvation: And it puts the soul on prayer; yea, a soul always in this frame, prays always. And there is nothing more evident, than that want of a thorough engagement unto the performance of these duties, is the great cause why so few come clear off from their entanglement all their days. Men heal their wounds slightly; and therefore, after a new painful festring, they are brought into the same condition of restlesness and trouble, which they were in before.

Grounds of miscarriages when persons are convinced of sin and humbled.----Resting in that state.----Resting on it.

The soul is not to be left in the state before described. There is other work for it to apply itself unto, if it intend to come unto rest and peace. It hath obtained an eminent advantage for the discovery of forgiveness. But to rest in that state wherein it is, or to rest upon it, will not bring it into its harbour. Three things we discovered before in the soul's first serious address unto God for deliverance; sense of sin, acknowledgement of it, and self-condemnation. Two evils there are which attend men oftentimes, when they are brought into that state. Some rest in it, and press no farther; some rest upon it, and suppose that it is all which is required of them: The psalmist avoids both these, and notwith-

standing all his pressures, reacheth out towards forgiveness, as we shall see in the next verse. I shall briefly unfold these two evils, and shew the necessity of their avoidance.

First, By resting or staying in it, I mean the soul's desponding through discouraging thoughts that deliverance is not to be obtained. Being made deeply sensible of sin, it is so overwhelmed with thoughts of its own vileness and unworthiness, as to sink under the burden; such a soul is *afflicted and tossed with tempests and not comforted,* Isa. liv. 11. until it is quite weary. As a ship in a storm at sea, when all means of contending are gone, men give up themselves to be driven and tossed by winds and seas at their pleasure. This brought Israel to that state wherein he cried out, *My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God,* Isa. xl. 27. and Zion, *The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me,* chap. xlix. 14. The soul begins secretly to think there is no hope; God regardeth it not; it shall one day perish, relief is far away, and trouble nigh at hand. These thoughts do so oppress them, that though they forsake not God utterly to their destruction, yet they draw not nigh unto him effectually to their consolation.

This is the first evil that the soul in this condition is enabled to avoid; we know how God rebukes it in Zion. Zion said, *The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me,* Isa. xlix. 14. But how foolish is Zion, how forward, how unbelieving in this matter; what ground hath she for sinful despondencies, such discouraging conclusions? *Can a woman,* saith the Lord, *forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb; yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee.* The like reproof he gives to Jacob upon the like complaint, chap. xl. 28, 29, 30. There is nothing that is more provoking to the Lord, nor more disadvantageous unto the soul, than such sinful despondency. For,

First,

Firſt, It inſenſibly weakens the ſoul, and diſenables it, both for preſent duties, and future endeavours. Hence, ſome poor creatures mourn, and even pine away in this condition, never getting one ſtep beyond a perplexing ſenſe of ſin all their days. Some have dwelt ſo long upon it, and have ſo intangled themſelves with a multitude of perplexed thoughts, that at length their natural faculties have been weakened, and rendered utterly uſeleſs; ſo that they have loſt both ſenſe of ſin and every thing elſe. Againſt ſome, Satan hath taken advantage to caſt in ſo many intangling objections into their minds, that their whole time hath been taken up in propoſing doubts and objections againſt themſelves; with theſe they have gone up and down, to one and another, and being never able to come unto a conſiſtency in their own thoughts, they have ſpent all their days in a fruitleſs, ſapleſs, withering, comfortleſs condition. Some, with whom things come to a better iſſue, are yet for a ſeaſon, brought to that diſcompoſure of ſpirit, or are ſo filled with their own apprehenſions, that when the things which are moſt proper to their condition are ſpoken to them, they take no impreſſion in the leaſt upon them. Thus the ſoul is weakened by dwelling too long on theſe conſiderations; until ſome cry with thoſe in Ezek. xxxiii. 10. *Our ſins are upon us, we pine away in them, and how ſhould we then live?*

Secondly, This frame, if it abides by itſelf, will inſenſibly give countenance unto hard thoughts of God, and ſo to repining, and wearineſs in waiting on him. At firſt the ſoul neither apprehends nor fears any ſuch iſſue: It ſuppoſeth that it ſhall condemn and abhor itſelf, and juſtify God, and that for ever; but when relief comes not in, this reſolution begins to weaken: Secret thoughts ariſe in the heart, that God is auſtere, inexorable, and not to be dealt withal; this ſometimes caſts forth ſuch complaints, as will bring the ſoul unto new complaints, before it comes to have an iſſue of its trials. Here, in humiliation antecedaneous to converſion, many a convinced perſon periſheth; they cannot

wait God's season, and perish under their impatience. And what the saints of God themselves have been overtaken withal in their depths and trials, we have many examples and instances. Delight and expectations are the grounds of our abiding with God; both these are weakened by a conquering prevailing sense of sin, without some relief from the discovery of forgiveness, tho' at a distance. And therefore our perplexed soul stays not here, but presseth on towards that discovery.

Secondly, There is a resting on this frame, that is noxious and hurtful also; some finding this sense of sin, with other things that attend it, wrought in them, in some measure, begin to think that now all is well, this is all that is of them required. They will endeavour to make a life, form such arguments of comfort, as they can take from their trouble; they think this a ground of peace, that they have not place. Here some take up before conversion, and it proves their ruin. Because they are convinced of sin, and troubled about it, and burdened with it, they think it shall be well with them: But were not Cain, Esau, Saul, Ahab, Judas, convinced of sin, and burdened with it; Did this profit them? Did it interest them in the promises? Did not the wrath of God overtake them notwithstanding? So is it with many daily; they think their conviction is conversion, and that their sins are pardoned, because they have been troubled.

This then is that which we reject, which the soul in this condition, doth carefully avoid; so as to satisfy itself with its humiliation, as to make that a ground of supportment and consolation, being thereby kept off from exercising faith for forgiveness: For this is,

First, A fruit of self-righteousness. For a soul to place the spring of its peace or comfort on any thing of its own, is to fall short of Christ, and to take up in self. We must not only be justified, but glory in him also, Isa. xlv. 25. men may make use of the evidence of their graces, but only as a medium to a farther end, not as the

the reſt of the ſoul at all; and this deprives mens very humiliations of all goſpel-humility. True humility conſiſts more in believing, than in being ſenſible of ſin; that's the ſoul's great ſelf-emptying and abaſing: This may conſiſt with an obſtinate reſolution to ſcramble for ſomething upon the account of ſelf-endeavours.

Secondly, Though evangelical ſenſe of ſin be a grace, yet it is not the uniting grace, it is not that which intereſts us in Chriſt, not that which peculiarly, and in its own nature exalts him. There is in this ſenſe of ſin, that which is natural, and that which is ſpiritual; or the matter of it, and its ſpirituality. The former conſiſts in ſorrow, trouble, ſelf-abaſement, dejection and anxiety of mind, with the like paſſions; of theſe I may ſay as the apoſtle of afflictions, they are not joyous but grievous. They are ſuch as are accompanied with the averſation of the object which they are converſant about. In their own nature, they are no more but the ſoul's retreat into itſelf, with an abhorrency of the objects of its ſorrow and grief. When theſe affections are ſpiritualized, their nature is not changed: The ſoul, in and by them, acts according to their nature; and doth by them, as ſuch, but retreat into itſelf, with a diſlike of that they are exerciſed about. To take up here then, muſt needs be to ſit down ſhort of Chriſt, whether it be for life, or conſolation.

Let there be no miſtake. There can be no evangelical ſenſe of ſin, and humiliation, where there is no union with Chriſt, Zech. xii. 10. Only in itſelf, and in its own nature is not availing. Now, Chriſt is the only reſt of our ſouls; in any thing, for any end or purpoſe, to take up ſhort of him, is to loſe it. It is not enough that we be *priſoners of hope*, but we muſt *turn to our ſtrong hold*, Zech. ix. 12. not enough that we are *weary and laden*, but we *muſt come to him*, Mat. xi. 27, 28. It will not ſuffice that we are weak, and know we are weak, but we muſt *take hold on the ſtrength of God*, Iſa. xxvii. 4, 5.

Thirdly, Indeed preſſing after forgiveneſs, is the very life

life and power of evangelical humiliation. How ſhall a man know that his humiliation is evangelical, that his ſorrow is according to God? It is not from hence he may be reſolved, that he doth it not, as Cain did, who cried his ſins were greater than he could bear, and ſo departed from the preſence of God? nor as Judas did, who repented, and hanged himſelf; nor as Felix did, tremble for a while, and then return to his luſts; nor as the Jews did, in the prophet, *pine away under their iniquities, becauſe of vexation of heart;* nor doth he divert his thoughts to other things, thereby to relieve his ſoul in his trouble; nor fix upon a righteouſneſs of his own; nor ſlothfully ly down under his perplexity; but in the midſt of it, he plies himſelf to God in Chriſt for pardon and mercy. And it is the ſoul's application unto God for forgiveneſs, and not its ſenſe of ſin, that gives unto God the glory of his grace.

Thus far then have we accompanied the ſoul in its depths; it is now looking out for forgiveneſs; which, what it is, and how we come to have an intereſt in it, the principal matter in this diſcourſe intended, is next to be conſidered.

VERSE IV.

The Words explained, and the Deſign or Scope of the Pſalmiſt in them diſcovered.

THE ſtate and condition of the ſoul making application unto God in this pſalm is recounted, ver. 1. It was in the depths; not only providential depths of trouble, affliction and perplexities thereon; but alſo depths of conſcience, diſtreſs on the account of ſin, as in the opening of thoſe words have been declared.

The application of this ſoul unto God, with reſtleſs fervency and earneſtneſs, in that ſtate and condition; its conſideration, in the firſt place, of the law, and the ſeverity

ſeverity of God's juſtice in a procedure thereon; with the inevitable ruin of all ſinners, if God inſiſt on that way of dealing with them, have alſo been opened and manifeſted from the foregoing verſes.

But in this eſtate, perplexed in itſelf, loſt in and under the conſideration of God's marking iniquity according to the tenor of the law, that which it fixes on, from whence any relief, ſtay, or ſupportment might be expected in ſuch a condition, is laid down in this verſe.

VER. 4. *But there is forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayeſt be feared.*

I ſhall firſt open the words as to their ſignification and importance; then ſhew the deſign of the pſalmiſt in them, with reference to the ſoul whoſe condition is here repreſented; and, laſtly, propoſe the general truths contained in them, wherein all our concernments do lie.

There is forgiveneſs, ἱλασμὸς ſay the LXX and Hierom accordingly *propitiatio*, propitiation; which is ſomewhat more than *venia* or pardon, as by ſome it is rendered.

Condonatio ipſa, forgiveneſs itſelf. It is from סלח to ſpare, to pardon, to forgive, to be propitious; and is oppoſed to חסל a word compoſed of the ſame letters varied, which is common in that language, ſignifying to cut off, and deſtroy.

Now, it is conſtantly applied unto ſin, and expreſſeth every thing that concurs to its pardon or forgiveneſs. As,

Firſt, It expreſſeth the mind or will of pardoning, or God's gracious readineſs to forgive, Pſal. lxxxvi. 5. *Thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive*, χρηστὸς καὶ ἐπιεικὴς, benign and meek, or ſparing, propitious, of a gracious merciful heart and nature. So Neh. ix. 17. Thou art, a God *propitiationum*, of propitiations or pardons; or as we rendered it, *ready to forgive*, a God of forgiveneſſes; or all plenty of them is in thy gracious heart,

Iſa.

Isa. lv. 8. So that thou art always ready to make out pardons to sinners. The word is used again, Dan. ix. 9. to the same purpose.

Secondly, It regards the act of pardoning, or actual forgiveness itself, Psal. ciii. 3. in the Heb. *who forgiveth all thine iniquities*, actually discharged thee of them; which the apostle respecting, renders the word by χαρισάμενος, Col. iii. 13. *Having freely forgiven you*, for so much the word imports, *all your trespasses*.

And this is the word that God useth in the covenant, in that great promise of grace and pardon, Jer. xxxi. 34.

It is warrantable for us, yea necessary to take the word in the utmost extent of its signification and use. It is a word of favour, and requires an interpretation towards the enlargement of it. We see it may be rendered ἱλασμὸς or propitiation, χάρις or grace, and *venia* or pardon, and may denote these three things.

First, The gracious, tender, merciful heart and will of God; who is the God of pardons and forgiveness, or one ready to forgive, to give out mercy, to add pardon.

Secondly, A respect unto Jesus Christ, the only ἱλασμὸς, or propitiation for sin, as he is expressly called, Rom. iii. 25. 1 John ii. 2. And this is that which interposeth between the gracious heart of God, and the actual pardon of sinners: All forgiveness is founded on propitiation.

Thirdly, It denotes condonation or actual forgiveness itself, as we are made partakers of it; comprizing it both actively, as it is an act of grace in God, and passively, as terminated in our souls, with all the deliverance that attends it. In this sense as it looks downwards, and in its effects respects us, it is of mere grace; and it looks upwards to its causes, and respects the Lord Christ, it is from propitiation or atonement; and this is that pardon which is administred in the covenant of grace.

Now, as to the place which these words enjoy in his psalm, and their relation to the state and condition

on of the ſoul here mentioned, this ſeems to be their importance.

" O Lord, although this muſt be granted, that if " thou ſhouldſt mark iniquities according to the tenor of " the law, every man living muſt periſh, and that for " ever; yet there is hope for my ſoul, that even I, who " am in the depths of ſin-intanglements, may find ac- " ceptance with thee; for whilſt I am putting my mouth " in the duſt, if ſo be there may be hope, I find that " there is an atonement, a propitiation made for ſin, on " the account whereof thou ſayeſt thou haſt found a " ranſom, and wilt not deal with them that come unto " thee, according to the ſeverity and exigence of thy " juſtice; but art gracious, loving, tender, ready to " forgive and pardon, and doſt ſo accordingly; THERE " IS FORGIVENESS WITH THEE."

The following words, *therefore thou ſhalt be feared*, or *that thou mayeſt be feared*, though in the original free from ambiguity, yet are ſo ſignally varied by interpreters, that it may not be amiſs to take notice of it in our paſſage.

The Targum hath it, *That thou mayeſt be ſeen* This anſwers not the word, but it doth the ſenſe of the place well enough. God in his diſpleaſure is ſaid to hide himſelf, or his face, Iſa. viii. 17. *The Lord hideth his face from the houſe of Jacob.* By forgiveneſs we obtain the light of his countenance, this diſpells the darkneſs and clouds that are about him, and gives us a comfortable proſpect of his face and favour *There is forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayeſt be ſeen.* Beſides, there is but one letter different in the original words, and that which is uſually changed for the other.

The LXX render them, ἕνεκα τοῦ ὀνόματός σου, *for thy name's ſake*, or *thy own ſake*, that is, freely without any reſpect unto any thing in us. This alſo would admit of a fair and ſound conſtruction, but that there is more than ordinary evidence of the place's being corrupted. For the vulgar Latin, which, as to the pſalms, was tranſlated out of the LXX, renders theſe words, *propter legem*

tuam, for thy law's sake; which makes it evident, that the translator read the words ἕνεκα τῦ νόμυ συ and not ὀνόματος, as now we read. Now, though this hath, in itself, no proper sense, (for forgiveness is not bestowed for the law's sake,) yet it discovers the original of the whole mistake. תורת The law differs but in one letter from תורא *thou mayest be feared*, by a mistake whereof this ἕνεκα το νόμυ, *for thy law's sake*, crept into the text. Nor doth this any thing countenance the corrupt figment of the Hebrew vowels and accents; as though this difference might arise from the LXX using a copy that had none, that is before their invention, which might occasion mistakes and differences, for this difference is in a letter as well as the vowels, and therefore there can be no colour for this conceit, unless we say also, that they had copies of old with other consonants than those we now enjoy. Bellarmine, in his exposition of this place, endeavours to give countenance unto the reading of the vulgar Latin, *for thy law's sake*, affirming, that by the law here, not the law of our obedience is intended, but the law or order of God's dealing with us, that is, his mercy and faithfulness; which is a mere new invention to countenance an old error, which any tolerable ingenuity would have confessed, rather than justified by so sorry a pretence. For neither is that expression, or that word, ever used in the sense here by him feigned, nor can it have any such signification.

Hierom renders these words, *ut sis terribilis, that thou mayest be dreadful or terrible;* doubtless not according to the intendment of the place. It is for the relieving of the soul, and not for the increasing of its dread and terror, that this observation is made, *There is forgiveness with thee.*

But the words are clear, and their sense is obvious, *Therefore thou shalt be feared*, or *that thou mayest be feared.*

By the fear of the Lord, in the Old Testament, the whole worship of God, moral and instituted, all the obedience which we owe unto him, both for matter and manner

manner, is intended. Whatever we are to perform unto God, being to be carried on and performed with reverence and godly fear, by a metonymy of the adjunct, that name is given to the whole. *That thou mayeſt be feared*, then is, that thou mayeſt be ſerved, worſhipped; that I who am ready to faint and give over, may yet be encouraged unto, and yet continue in that obedience which thou requireſt at my hands; and this appears to be ſenſe of the whole verſe, as influenced by, and from thoſe foregoing.

"Although, O Lord, no man can approach unto "thee, ſtand before thee, or walk with thee, if thou "ſhouldſt mark their ſins and follies according to the "tenor of the law, nor could they ſerve ſo great and "holy a God as thou art; yet becauſe I know from thy "revelation of it, that there is alſo with thee, on the "account of Jeſus Chriſt, the propitiation, pardon and "forgiveneſs, I am encouraged to continue with thee, "waiting for thee, worſhipping of thee; when, with-"out this diſcovery, I ſhould rather chuſe to have rocks "and mountains fall upon me, to hide me from thy "preſence. BUT THERE IS FORGIVENESS WITH "THEE, AND THEREFORE THOU SHALT BE FEAR-"ED."

The words being thus opened, we may take a full view in them of the ſtate and condition of the ſoul expreſſed in this pſalm, and that anſwering the experiences of all who have any thing to do with God, in and about the depths and entanglements of ſin.

Having in, and from his great depths, ver. 1. addreſſed himſelf with fervent redoubled cries, yea outcries to God, and to him alone for relief, ver. 1, 2. Having alſo acknowledged his iniquities, and conſidered them according to the tenor of the law, ver. 3. he confeſſeth himſelf to be loſt and undone for ever on that account, ver. 3. But he abides not in the ſtate of ſelf-condemnation, and dejection of ſoul; he ſays not there is no hope, God is a jealous God, an holy God I cannot ſerve him, his law is a fiery law, which I cannot ſtand

before, ſo that I had as good give over, ſit down and periſh, as contend any longer! No; but ſearching by faith, into the diſcovery that God makes of himſelf in Chriſt, through the covenant of grace, he finds a ſtable foundation of encouragement, to continue waiting on him, with expectation of mercy and pardon.

Propoſitions or obſervations from the former expoſition of the words ----The firſt propoſed to confirmation -- -No encouragement for any ſinner to approach unto God, without a diſcovery of forgiveneſs.

From the words thus unfolded, as they ly in their contexture, in the pſalm, the enſuing propoſitions do ariſe.

Prop. 1. Faith's diſcovery of forgiveneſs in God, though it have no preſent ſenſe of its own peculiar intereſt therein, is the great ſupportment of a ſin-perplexed ſoul.

Prop. 2. Goſpel-forgiveneſs, whoſe diſcovery is the ſole ſupportment of ſin-diſtreſſed ſouls, relates to the gracious heart, or good will of the Father, the God of forgiveneſs, the propitiation that is made by the blood of the Son, and free condonation or pardon, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace.

Prop 3. Faith's diſcovery of forgiveneſs in God, is the ſole bottom of adherence to him, in acceptable worſhip and reverential obedience.

The *firſt* of theſe, is that whoſe confirmation and improvement I principally aim at; and the other only ſo far as they have coincidence therewith, or may be uſed in a ſubſerviency to the illuſtration or demonſtration thereof.

In the handling then of this truth, that it may be of the

the more advantage unto them whose good is sought, and intended in the proposal and management of it, I shall steer this course, and shew,

First, That there is not the least encouragement to the soul of a sinner to deal with God without this discovery.

Secondly, That this discovery of forgiveness in God is a matter great, holy, and mysterious, and which very few, on gospel abiding grounds, do attain unto.

Thirdly, That yet this is a great, sacred, and certain truth, as from the manifold evidences may be made to appear.

Fourthly, That this is a stable supportment to a sin-distressed soul, shall be manifested, and the whole plied, according to the several concernments of those who shall consider it.

First, There is not the least encouragement for the soul of a sinner, to entertain any thought of approaching unto God without this discovery. All the rest of the world is covered with a deluge of wrath, this is the only ark whereunto the soul may repair and find rest, all without it, is darkness, curse, and terror.

We have an instance and example of it, beyond all exception, in Adam. When he knew himself to be a sinner, and it was impossible for him, as we shall shew afterwards, to make a discovery of any such thing as forgiveness with God, he laid aside all thoughts of treating with him, the best of his foolish contrivance was for an escape, Gen. iii. 10. *I heard thy voice*, saith he to God, *in the garden, and was* AFRAID, *because I was naked, and I* HID *myself.* Nothing but, *Thou shalt die the death*, sounded in his ears. In the morning of that day, he was made by the hand of God; a few hours before, he had converse and communion with him

him, with boldneſs and peace; why then doth nothing now but *fear*, *flying*, and *hiding* poſſeſs him? Adam had ſinned, the promiſe was not yet given, no revelation made of forgiveneſs in God, and what other courſe than that vain and fooliſh one, to fix upon, he knew not; no more can any of his poſterity without this revelation. What elſe any of them hath fixed on in this caſe, hath been no leſs fooliſh than his hiding, and in moſt, more pernicious. When Cain had received his ſentence from God, it is ſaid, he went out *from the preſence* or face *of the Lord*, Gen. iv. 16. From his providential preſence he could never ſubduct himſelf: So the pſalmiſt informs us at large, Pſal. cxxxix. 7, 8, 9. The very heathen knew, by the light of nature, that guilt could never drive men out of the reach of God.

Quo fugis, Encelade, quaſcunq; acceſſeris oras
Sub Jove ſemper eris.

They knew that δίκη (the vengeance of God) would not ſpare ſinners, nor could be avoided, Acts xxviii. 4. from God's gracious preſence, which he never enjoyed, he could not depart. It was then his preſence as to his worſhip, and all outward acts of communion that he forſook, and departed from; he had no diſcovery by faith of forgiveneſs, and therefore reſolved to have no more to do with God nor thoſe who cleaved to him; for it reſpects his courſe, and not any one particular action.

This alſo is ſtated, Iſa. xxxiii. 14. *The ſinners in Sion are afraid, fearfulneſs hath ſurprized the hypocrites; Who among us ſhall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us ſhall dwell with everlaſting burnings?* The perſons ſpoken of are ſinners, great ſinners and hypocrites; conviction of ſin, and the deſert of it was fallen upon them, a light to diſcern forgiveneſs they had not, they apprehend God as a devouring fire, and everlaſting burnings only, one that would not ſpare, but aſſuredly inflict puniſhment according to the deſert of ſin; and thence is their concluſion couched in their interrogation,

and

that there can be no intercourſe or peace between him and them, there is no abiding, no enduring of his preſence. And what condition this conſideration brings the ſouls of ſinners unto, when conviction grows ſtrong upon them, the Holy Ghoſt declares, Micah vi. 6, 7. *Wherewithal ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, or with ten thouſands of rivers of oyl? ſhall I give my firſt-born for my tranſgreſſion, the fruit of my body for the ſin of my ſoul?* Senſe of ſin preſſeth, forgiveneſs is not diſcovered, (like the Philiſtines on Saul, Samuel not coming to his direction) and how doth the poor creature perplex itſelf in vain, to find out a way of dealing with God; will a ſedulous and diligent obſervation of his own ordinances and inſtitutions relieve me? *Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, and calves of a year old?* Alas! thou art a ſinner and theſe ſacrifices cannot make thee perfect, or acquit thee, Heb. x. 1. Shall I do more than ever he required of any of the ſons of men? *O that I had thouſands of rams, and ten thouſands of rivers of oil to offer to him!* Alas! if thou hadſt all the bulls and goats in the world, it is not poſſible their blood ſhould take away ſins, ver. 4. But I have heard of them who have ſnatched away their own children from their mother's breaſts, and caſt them into the fire, until they were conſumed, ſo to pacify their conſciences in expiating the guilt of their iniquities; ſhall I take this courſe? will it relieve me? I am ready to part with my firſt-born into the fire, ſo may I have deliverance from my tranſgreſſions. Alas! this never came into the heart of God to approve or accept of. And as it was then, whilſt that kind of worſhip was in force, ſo is it ſtill as to any duties really to be performed, or imaginarily. Where there is no diſcovery of forgiveneſs, they will yield the ſoul no relief, no ſupportment; God is not to be treated upon ſuch terms.

Greatneſs

Greatneſs and rareneſs of the diſcovery of forgiveneſs in God.----Reaſons of it.----Teſtimonies of conſcience and law againſt it, *&c.*

SECONDLY. This diſcovery of forgiveneſs in God is great, holy, and myſterious, which very few on goſpel-ground do attain unto.

All men indeed ſay there is, moſt men are perſuaded that they think ſo. Only men in great and deſperate extremities, like Cain or Spira, ſeem to call it into queſtion. But their thoughts are empty, groundleſs, yea, for the moſt part, wicked, and atheiſtical. Elihu tells us, that to declare this aright to a ſinful ſoul, it is the work of *a meſſenger, an interpreter, one among a thouſand,* Job xxxiii. 23. that is, indeed, of Chriſt himſelf. The common thoughts of men about this thing are ſlight and fooliſh; and may be reſolved into thoſe mentioned by the pſalmiſt, Pſal. l. 22. They think that *God is altogether like themſelves.* That indeed he takes little or no care about theſe things, but paſſeth them over as ſlightly as they do themſelves. That, notwithſtanding all their pretences, the moſt of men never had, indeed, a real diſcovery of forgiveneſs, ſhall be afterwards undeniably evinced; and I ſhall ſpeedily ſhew the difference that is between their vain credulity, and a gracious goſpel-diſcovery of forgiveneſs in God. For, it muſt be obſerved, that by this diſcovery, I intend, both the revelation of it made by God, and our underſtanding, and reception of that revelation to our own advantage, as ſhall be ſhewed immediately.

Now, the grounds of the difficulty intimated, conſiſt partly in the hindrances that ly in the way of this diſcovery; and partly, in the nature of the thing itſelf, that is diſcovered; of both which I ſhall briefly treat.

But here, before I proceed, ſomewhat muſt be premiſed to ſhew what it is, that I particularly intend by a diſcovery of forgiveneſs. It may then be conſidered two ways; 1. For a doctrinal, objective diſcovery of it in its truths. 2. An experimental, ſubjective diſcovery of its power.

power. In the firſt ſenſe, forgiveneſs in God hath been diſcovered ever ſince the giving out of the firſt promiſe: God revealed it in a word of promiſe, or it could never have been known, as ſhall be afterwards declared. In this ſenſe, after many leſſer degrees and advancements of the light of it, it was fully and gloriouſly brought forth by the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in his own perſon; and is now revealed, and preached in the goſpel, and by them to whom the word of reconciliation is committed; and to declare this, is the principal work of the miniſters of the goſpel. Herein ly thoſe unſearchable treaſures and riches of Chriſt, which the apoſtle eſteemed as his chiefeſt honour and privilege, that he was intruſted with the declaration and diſpenſation of, Eph. iii. 8, 9. I know by many it is deſpiſed, by many traduced, whoſe ignorance and blindneſs is to be lamented. But the day is coming which will manifeſt every man's work of what ſort it is. In the latter ſenſe, how it is made by faith in the ſoul, ſhall in its proper place be further opened and made known. Here men may miſtake and deceive themſelves; becauſe it is ſo in the book, they think it is ſo in them alſo; becauſe they have been taught it, they think they believe it. But it is not ſo; they have not heard this voice of God at any time, nor ſeen his ſhape, it hath not been revealed unto them in its power: To have this done is a great work. For,

Firſt, The conſtant voice of conſcience lies againſt it. Conſcience, if not feared, inexorably condemneth, and pronounceth wrath and anger upon the ſoul that hath the leaſt guilt cleaving to it. Now it hath this advantage, it lieth cloſe to the ſoul, and, by importunity and loud ſpeaking, it will be heard in what it hath to ſay, it will make the whole ſoul attend, or it will ſpeak like thunder. And its conſtant voice is, that where there is guilt there muſt be judgment, Rom. ii. 14, 15. Conſcience naturally knows nothing of forgiveneſs; yea, it is againſt its very truſt, work and office to hear any thing of it. If a man of courage and honeſty be intruſted to keep a

garriſon againſt an enemy, let one come and tell him that there is peace made between thoſe whom he ſerves and their enemies, ſo that he may leave his guard, and ſet open the gates, and ceaſe his watchfulneſs: how wary will he be, leſt under this pretence he be betrayed? No, ſaith he, I will keep my hold, until I have expreſs order from my ſuperiors. Conſcience is entruſted with the power of God in the ſoul of a ſinner, with command to keep all in ſubjection with reference unto the judgment to come. It will not betray its truſt in believing every report of peace: no, but this it ſays, and it ſpeaks in the name of God, Guilt and puniſhment are inſeparable twins, if the ſoul ſin, God will judge. What tell you me of forgiveneſs, I know what my commiſſion is, and that I will abide by, you ſhall not bring in a ſuperior commander, a croſs principle into my truſt, for if this be ſo, it ſeems I muſt let go my throne, another Lord muſt come in, not knowing as yet how this whole buſineſs is compounded in the blood of Chriſt. Now, whom ſhould a man believe, if not his own conſcience, which, as it will not flatter him, ſo it intends not to affright him, but to ſpeak the truth as the matter requireth. Conſcience hath two works in reference unto ſin; one to condemn the acts of ſin, another to judge the perſon of the ſinner, both with reference to the judgment of God. When forgiveneſs comes, it would ſever and part theſe employments, and take one of them out of the hand of conſcience, it would divide the ſpoil with this ſtrong one. It ſhall condemn the fact, or every ſin; but it ſhall no more condemn the ſinner, the perſon of the ſinner, that ſhall be freed from its ſentence. Here conſcience labours with all its might to keep its whole dominion; and to keep out the power of forgiveneſs from being enthroned in the ſoul. It will allow men to talk of forgiveneſs, to hear it preached, though they abuſe it every day, but to receive it in its power, that ſtands up in direct oppoſition to its dominion, in the kingdom, ſaith the conſcience, I will be greater than

thou;

thou; and in many, in the moſt, it keeps its poſſeſſion, and will not be depoſed.

Nor indeed is it an eaſy work ſo to deal with it. The apoſtle tells us, that all the ſacrifices of the law could not do it, Heb. x. 2. they could not bring a man into that eſtate, wherein he ſhould not have any conſcience of ſin, that is, conſcience condemning the perſon; for conſcience in a ſenſe of ſin, and condemnation of it, is never to be taken away. And this can be no otherwiſe done but by the blood of Chriſt, as the apoſtle at large there declares.

It is then no eaſy thing to make a diſcovery of forgiveneſs unto a ſoul, when the work and employment which conſcience, upon unqueſtionable grounds, challengeth unto itſelf, lies in oppoſition unto it. Hence is the ſoul's great deſire to eſtabliſh its own righteouſneſs, whereby its natural principles may be preſerved in their power. Let ſelf-righteouſneſs be enthroned, and natural conſcience deſires no more, it is ſatisfied and pacified. The law it knows, and righteouſneſs it knows, but as for forgiveneſs, it ſays, Whence is it? Unto the utmoſt, until Chriſt perfects his conqueſt, there are on this account ſecret ſtrugglings in the heart againſt free pardon in the goſpel, and fluctuations of mind and ſpirit about it; yea, hence are the doubts and fears of believers themſelves, they are nothing but the ſtrivings of conſcience to keep its whole dominion, to condemn the ſinner as well as the ſin: more or leſs it keeps up its pretenſions againſt the goſpel, whilſt we live in this world. It is a great work that the blood of Chriſt hath to do upon the conſcience of a ſinner, for whereas, as it hath been declared, it hath a power, and claims a right, to condemn both ſin and ſinner; the one part of this its power is to be cleared, ſtrengthened, made more active, vigorous and watchful, the other to be taken quite away: It ſhall now ſee more ſins than formerly, more of the vileneſs of all ſins than formerly, and condemn them with more abhorrency than ever, upon more, and more glorious accounts than formerly; but it is alſo

made to ſee an interpoſition between theſe ſins, and the perſon of the ſinner, who hath committed them, which is no ſmall or ordinary work.

Secondly, The law lies againſt this diſcovery. The law is a beam of the holineſs of God himſelf, what it ſpeaks unto us, it ſpeaks in the name and authority of God, and I ſhall briefly ſhew concerning it theſe two things

1ſt, That this is the voice of the law, namely, that there is no forgiveneſs for a ſinner.

2dly, That the ſinner hath great reaſon to give credit to the law in that aſſertion.

It is certain that the law knows neither mercy nor forgiveneſs. The very ſanction of it lies wholly againſt them. *The ſoul that ſinneth ſhall die. Curſed is he that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*, Deut. xxvii. 26. Hence the apoſtle pronounceth univerſally without exception, that they who are *under the law, are under the curſe*, Gal. iii 10. and, ſaith he, ver. 12. *The law is not of faith.* There is an inconſiſtency between the law and believing, they cannot have their abode in power together. Do this and live, fail and die; is the conſtant immutable voice of the law. This it ſpeaks in general to all, and this in particular to every one.

2dly, The ſinner ſeems to have manifold and weighty reaſons to attend to the voice of this law, and to acquieſce in its ſentence. For,

1. The law is co-natural to him, his domeſtic, his old acquaintance; it came into the world with him, and hath grown up with him from his infancy; it was implanted in his heart by nature, is his own reaſon, he can never ſhake it off, or part with it; it is his familiar, his friend, that cleaves to him as the fleſh to the bone; ſo that they who have not the law written, cannot but ſhew *forth the work of the law*, Rom. ii. 14, 15. and that becauſe the law itſelf is inbred to them, and all the faculties of the ſoul are at peace with it, in ſubjection to it; it is the bond and ligament of their union, harmony;

harmony, and correſpondency among themſelves, in all their moral actings, it gives life, order, and motion to them all. Now, the goſpel that comes to controul this ſentence of the law, and to relieve the ſinner from it, is foreign to his nature, a ſtrange thing to him, a thing he hath no acquaintance or familiarity with, it hath not been bred up with him, nor is there any thing in him to ſide with it, to make a party for it, or to plead in its behalf. Now, ſhall not a man rather believe a domeſtick, a friend, indeed himſelf, than a foreigner, a ſtranger, that comes with uncouth principles, and ſuch as ſuit not its reaſon at all? 1 Cor. i. 18.

2. The law ſpeaks nothing to a ſinner, but what his conſcience aſſures him to be true; there is a conſtant concurrence in the teſtimony of the law and conſcience. When the law ſays, this or that is a ſin worthy of death, ſays, it is even ſo, Rom. i. 42. And where the law, of itſelf, as being a general rule, reſts, conſcience helps it on, and ſays, this and that ſin, ſo worthy of death, the ſoul is guilty of; then die, ſaith the law, as thou haſt deſerved. Now, this muſt needs have a mighty efficacy to prevail with the ſoul to give credit to the report and teſtimony of the law, it ſpeaks not one word, but what he hath a witneſs within himſelf to the truth of it. Theſe witneſſes always agree, and ſo it ſeems to be eſtabliſhed for a truth, that there is no forgiveneſs.

3. The law, tho' it ſpeaks againſt the ſoul's intereſt, yet it ſpeaks nothing but what is ſo juſt, righteous, and equal, that even it forceth the ſoul's free conſent. So Paul tells us, that men *know this voice of the law to be the judgment of God*, Rom. i. 32. They know it, and cannot but conſent unto it, that it is the judgment of God, that is, good, righteous, equal, not to be controuled. And, indeed, what can be more righteous than its ſentence? It commands obedience to the God of life and death, promiſeth a reward, and declares, that for non-performance of duty, death will be inflicted. On theſe terms the ſinner cometh into the world, they are good, righteous, holy, the ſoul accepts of them, and knows

knows not what it can deſire better, or more equal. This the apoſtle inſiſts upon, Rom. vii. 12, 13. *Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and juſt and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid; but ſin, that it might appear ſin, working death in me, by that which is good; that ſin by the commandment might become exceeding ſinful.* Whereever the blame falls, the ſoul cannot but acquit the law, and confeſs that what it ſays is righteous and incontroulably equal, and it is meet things ſhould be ſo. Now, though the authority and credit of a witneſs may go very far in a doubtful matter, when there is a concurrence of more witneſſes it ſtrengthens the teſtimony; but nothing is ſo prevalent to beget belief, as when the things themſelves that are ſpoken are juſt and good, not liable to any reaſonable exception. And ſo it is in this caſe: Unto the authority of the law, and concurrence of conſcience, this is alſo added, the reaſonableneſs and equity of the thing itſelf propoſed, even in the judgment of the ſinner, namely, that every ſin ſhall be puniſhed, and every tranſgreſſion receive a meet recompence of reward.

4. But yet farther. What the law ſays, it ſpeaks in the name and authority of God; what it ſays then muſt be believed, or we make God a liar. It comes not in its own name, but in the name of him who appointed it: You will then ſay, Is it ſo indeed? Is there no forgiveneſs with God? for this is the conſtant voice of the law, which, you ſay, ſpeaks in the name and authority of God, and is therefore to be believed. I anſwer briefly with the apoſtle, *What the law ſpeaks, it ſpeaks to them that are under the law.* It doth not ſpeak to them that are in Chriſt, whom the *law of the Spirit of life hath ſet free from the law of ſin and death;* but to them that are under the law it ſpeaks, and it ſpeaks the very truth, and it ſpeaks in the name of God, and its teſtimony is to be received. It ſays there is no forgiveneſs in God, namely, to them that are under the law; and they that ſhall flatter themſelves with a contrary perſuaſion,

ſuaſion, will find themſelves greatly miſtaken at the great day.

On theſe and the like conſiderations, I ſay, there ſeems to be a great deal of reaſon, why a ſoul ſhould conclude, that it will be according to the teſtimony of the law, and that he ſhall not find forgiveneſs. Law and conſcience cloſe together, and inſinuate themſelves into the thoughts, mind, and judgment of a ſinner. They ſtrengthen the teſtimony of one another and greatly prevail. If any are otherwiſe minded, I leave them to the trial: If ever God awaken their conſciences to a thorough performance of their duty, if ever he open their ſouls, and let in the light and power of the law upon them, they will find it no ſmall work to grapple with them. I am ſure, that eventually they prevail ſo far, that, in the preaching of the goſpel, we have great cauſe to ſay, *Lord, who hath believed our report?* We come with our report of forgiveneſs, but who believes it? by whom is it received? Neither doth the light, nor conſcience, nor converſation of the moſt, allow us to ſuppoſe it is embraced.

Thirdly, The ingrafted notions that are in the minds of men, concerning the nature and juſtice of God, ly againſt this diſcovery alſo. There are in all men by nature indelible characters of the holineſs and purity of God, of his juſtice and hatred of ſin, of his invariable righteouſneſs in the government of the world, that they can neither depoſe nor lay aſide. For notions of God, whatever they are, will bear ſway and rule in the heart when things were put to the trial; they were in the heathens of old, they abode with them in all their darkneſs, as might be manifeſted by innumerable inſtances. But ſo it is in all men by nature: Their inward thought is, that God is an avenger of ſin, that it belongs to his rule and government of the world, his holineſs and righteouſneſs, to take care that every ſin be puniſhed. This is his judgment, which all men know, as was obſerved before, Rom. i. 32. They know, that it is a righteous thing with God to render tribulation unto ſinners. From thence

thence is that dread and fear which ſurpriſeth men at an apprehenſion of the preſence of God, or of any under him, above them, that may ſeem to come on his errand. This notion, of God's avenging all ſin, exerts itſelf ſecretly, but effectually: So Adam trembled, and hid himſelf; and it was the ſaying of old, *I have ſeen God, and ſhall die.* When men are under any dreadful providence, thundrings, lightnings, tempeſts, in darkneſs, they tremble, not ſo much at what they ſee, or hear, or feel, as from their ſecret thoughts that God is nigh. and that he is a conſuming fire.

Now theſe inbred notions ly univerſally againſt all apprehenſions of forgiveneſs, which muſt be brought into the ſoul from without doors, having no principle of nature to promote them.

It is true, men by nature have preſumptions, and common ingrafted notions, of other properties of God, beſides his holineſs and juſtice, as of his goodneſs, benignity, love of his creatures and the like; but all this have this ſuppoſition inlaid with them in the ſouls of men, namely, that all things ſtand between God and his creatures, as they did at their firſt creation; and as they have no natural notion of forgiveneſs, ſo the interpoſition of ſin weakens, diſturbs, darkens them, as to any improvement of thoſe apprehenſions of goodneſs and benignity, which they have. If they have any notion of forgiveneſs, it is from ſome corrupt tradition, and not at all from any univerſal principle that is inbred in nature, ſuch are thoſe which they have of God's holineſs and vindictive juſtice.

And this is the firſt ground. From whence it appears, that a real, ſolid diſcovery of forgiveneſs is indeed a great work, many difficulties and hindrances ly in the way of its accompliſhment.

Falſe preſumptions of forgiveneſs diſcovered.---Differences between them, and faith evangelical.

Before I proceed to produce and manage the remaining

ing evidences of this truth, because what hath been spoken lies obnoxious and open to an objection, which must needs rise in the minds of many; that it may not thereby be rendered useless unto them, I shall remove it out of the way, that we may pass on to what remains.

It will then be said, Doth not all this ly directly contrary to our daily experience? Do ye not find all men full enough, most too full of apprehensions of forgiveness with God? What so common as God is merciful? Are not the consciences and convictions of the most stifled by this apprehension? Can you find a man that is otherwise minded? Is it not a common complaint, that men presume on it, unto their eternal ruin? Certainly then, that which all men do, which man every can so easily do, and which you cannot keep men off from doing, though it be to their hurt, hath no such difficulty in it as is pretended. And on this very account, hath this weak endeavour to demonstrate this truth, been by some laughed to scorn, men who have taken upon them the teaching of others, but, as it seems, had need be taught themselves, the very first principles of the oracles of God.

Answ. All this, then, I say is so, and much more to this purpose may be spoken. The folly and presumption of poor souls can never enough be lamented; but it is one thing to embrace a cloud a shadow, another to have the truth in reality. I shall hereafter shew the true nature of forgiveness, and wherein it doth consist, whereby the vanity of this self-deceiving will be discovered and laid open. It will appear in the issue, that notwithstanding all their pretensions, that the most of men know nothing at all, or not any thing to the purpose, of that which is under consideration. I shall therefore, for the present, in some few observations, shew how far this delusion of many differs from a true gospel discovery of forgiveness, such as that we are enqniring after.

First, The common notion of forgiveness, that men

have in the world, is twofold, *1st*, An atheistical presumption on God, that he is not so just and holy, or not just and holy in such a way and manner, as he is by some represented, is the ground of persuasion or forgiveness. Men think that some declarations of God are fitted only to make them mad, that he takes little notice of these things, and that what he doth, he will easily pass by, as they suppose better becomes him Come, *Let us eat and drink for to-morrrw we shall die.* This is their inward thoughts, *The Lord will not do good, nor will he do evil*, which, says the Psalmist, is mens *thinking that God is such a one as themselves*, Psal. li. 21. They have no deep nor serious thoughts of his greatness, holiness, purity, severity, but think that he is like themselves, so far as not to be much moved with what they do. What thoughts they have of sin, the same they think God hath. If with them a slight ejaculation be enough to expiate sin, that their consciences be no more troubled, they think it is enough with God, that it be not punished. The generality of men make light work of sin; and yet in nothing doth it more appear what thoughts they have of God: He that hath slight thoughts of sin, had never great thoughts of God. Indeed mens undervaluing of sin ariseth merely from their contempt of God. All sin's concernments flow from its relation unto God; and, as men's apprehensions are of God, so will they be of sin, which is an opposition to him. This is the frame of the most of men, they know little of God, and are little troubled about any thing that relates unto him. God is not reverenced, sin is but a trifle, forgiveness a matter of nothing, who so will, may have it for asking. But shall this atheistical wickedness of the heart of man be called a discovery of forgiveness? Is not this to make God an idol? He who is not acquainted with God's holiness and purity, who knows not sins desert and sinfulness, knows nothing of forgiveness.

2dly, From the doctrine of the gospel commonly preached and made known, there is a general notion begotten

gotten in the minds of men, that God is ready to forgive. Men, I say, from hence have a doctrinal apprehension of this truth, without any real satisfactory foundation of that apprehension as to themselves. This they have heard, this they have been often told, so they think, and so they resolved to do. A general persuasion hereof, spreads itself over all to whom the sound of the gospel doth come. It is not fiducially resolved into the gospel, but is an opinion growing out of the report of it.

Some relief men find by it, in the duties of worship which they do perform, as also in their troubles and distresses, whether internal and of conscience, or external and of providence, so that they resolve to retain it.

And this is that which I shall briefly speak unto, and therein manifest the differences between this common prevailing apprehension of forgiveness, and faith's discovery of it to the soul in its power.

First, That which we reject is loose and general, not fixed, ingrafted or planted in the mind. So is it always, where the minds of men receive things only in their notion not in their power. It wants fixednnss and foundation, which defects accompany all notions of the mind that are only retained in the memory, not implanted in the judgment. They have general thoughts of it, which they use as occasion serves. They hear that God is a merciful God, and as such they intend to deal with him. For the true bottom, rise, and foundation of it, whence or on what account, the pure and holy God, who will do no iniquity, the righteous God, whose judgment it is, that they that commit sin are worthy of death, should yet pardon iniquity, transgression and sin, they weigh it not, they consider it not, or if they do, it is in a slight and notional way, as they consider the thing itself. They take it for granted that so it is, and are never put seriously upon the inquiry, how it comes to be so; and that because indeed they have no real concernment in it. How many thousands may we meet withal, who take it for granted, that forgiveness is to be had with God, that

never yet had any serious exercise in their souls about the grounds of it, and its consistency with his holiness and justice. But those that know it by faith, have a sense of it fixed particularly and distinctly on their minds. They have been put upon an enquiry into the rise and grounds of it in Christ, so that, on a good unquestionable foundation, they can go to God, and say, *There is forgiveness with thee.* They see how, and by what means, more glory comes unto God by forgiveness, than by punishing sin; which is a matter that the other sort of men are not at all sollicitous about. If they may escape punishment, whether God have any glory or no, for the most part they are indifferent.

Secondly, The first apprehension ariseth without any trial upon enquiry in the consciences of them in whom it is. They have not, by the power of their convictions, and distresses of conscience, been put to make enquiry whether this thing be so or no. It is not a persuasion that they have not arrived unto, in a way of seeking satisfaction to their own souls; it is not the result of a deep enquiry after peace and rest; it is not antecedent unto trial and experience, and so is not faith but opinion. For although faith be not experience, yet it is inseparable from it, as is every practical habit. Distresses in their consciences have been prevented by this opinion, not removed. The reason why the most part of men are not troubled about their sins to any purpose, is from a persuasion that God is merciful and will pardon; when indeed none can really, on a gospel-account, ordinarily, have that persuasion, but those who have been troubled for sin, and that to no purpose. So it is with them that make this discovery by faith: They have had conflicts in their own spirits, and being deprived of peace, have accomplished a diligent search, whether forgiveness were to be obtained or no. The persuasion they have of it, be it more or less, is the issue of a trial they have had in their souls, of an enquiry how things stood between God and them, as to peace and acceptation of their persons. This is a vast difference;

rence; the one sort might possibly have had trouble in their consciences about sin, had it not been for their opinion of forgiveness, this hath prevented or stifled their convictions, not healed their wounds, which is the work of the gospel, but kept them from being wounded, which is the work of security; yea, here lies the ruin of the most of them who perish under the preaching of the gospel. They have received the general notion of pardon, it floats on their minds, and presents itself to their relief, on all occasions. Doth God at any time, in the dispensation of the word, under an affliction, upon some great sin against their ruling light, begin to deal with their consciences? before their conviction can ripen, or come to any perfection, before it draw nigh to its perfect work, they choak it, and heal their consciences with this notion of pardon. Many a man between the assembly and his dwelling-house is thus cured. You may see them go away shaking their heads, and striking on their breasts, and before they come home, be as whole as ever. Well, God is merciful, there is pardon, have wrought their cure. The other sort have obtained their persuasion as a result of the discovery of Christ in the gospel, upon a full conviction. Trials they have had, and this is the issue.

Thirdly, The one, which we reject, worketh no love to God, no delight in him, no reverence of him, but rather a contempt and commonness of spirit in dealing with him. There are none in the world that deal worse with God, than those who have an ungrounded persuasion of forgiveness; and if they do fear him, or love him, or obey him in any thing more or less, it is on other motives and considerations, which will not render any thing they do acceptable, and not at all on this. As he is good to the creation, they may love; as he is great and powerful, they may fear him; but sense of pardon, as to any such ends or purposes, hath no power upon them. Carnal boldness, formality, and despising of God, are the common issues of such a notion and persuasion. Indeed this is the generation of great sinners in the

the world, men who have a general apprehension, but not a sense of the special power of pardon, openly, or secretly, in fleshly or spiritual sins, are the great sinners among men. Where faith makes a discovery of forgiveness, all things are otherwise: Great love, fear, and reverence of God, are its attendants. Mary Magdalen loved much, because much was forgiven. Great love will spring out of great forgiveness. *There is forgiveness with thee*, saith the psalmist, *that thou mayst be feared.* No unbeliever doth truly and experimentally know the truth of this inference But so it is, when men *fear the Lord and his goodness*, Hos. iii. 5. I say then, where pardoning mercy is truly apprehended, where faith makes a discovery of it to the soul, it is endeared unto God, and possessed of the great springs of love, delight, fear, and reverence, Psal. cxvi. 1. 5, 6, 7.

Fourthly, This notional apprehension of the pardon of sin, begets no serious thorough hatred and detestation of sin, nor is prevalent to a relinquishment of it; nay, it rather secretly insinuates into the soul encouragements unto a continuance in it. It is the nature of it to lessen and extenuate sin, and to support the soul against its convictions. So Jude tells us, that some *turn the grace of God into lascivousness*, ver. 4. and, says he, *they are ungodly men;* let them profess what they will, they are ungodly men: But how can they turn the grace of our God into lascivousness? Is grace capable of such a conversion into lust or sin? Will what was once grace, ever become wantonness? it is objective, not subjective grace, the doctrine not the real substance of grace, that is intended. The doctrine of forgiveness, is this grace of God, which may be thus abused. From hence do men, who have only a general notion of it, habitually draw secret encouragements to sin and folly. Paul also lets us know, that carnal men coming to a doctrinal acquaintance with gospel-grace, are very apt to make such conclusions, Rom. vi. 1. And it will appear at the last day, how unspeakably this glorious grace hath been perverted

perverted in the world. It would be well for many if they had never heard the name of forgiveness. It is otherwise where this revelation is received indeed in the soul by believing, Rom. vi. 14. Our being under grace, under the power of the belief of forgiveness, is our great preservative from our being under the power of sin. Faith of forgiveness is the principle of gospel-obedience, Tit. ii. 11, 12.

Fifthly, The general notion of forgiveness brings with it no sweetness, no rest to the soul. Flashes of joy it may, abiding rest it doth not. The truth of the doctrine fluctuates to and fro in the minds of those that have it, but their wills and affections have no solid delight nor rest by it. Hence, notwithstanding all that profession that is made in the world of forgiveness, the most of men ultimately resolve their peace and comfort unto themselves. As their apprehensions are of their own doing, good or evil, according to their ruling light whatever it be, so as to peace and rest, are they secretly tossed up and down. Every one in his several way pleaseth himself with what he doth, in answer unto his own convictions, and is disquieted as to his state and condition, according as he seems to himself to come short thereof. To make a full life of contentation upon pardon, they know not how to do it. One duty yields them more true repose than many thoughts of forgiveness. But faith finds sweetness and rest in it; being thereby apprehended, it is the only harbour of the soul: It leads man to God as good, to Christ as rest. Fading, evanid joys, do oft-times attend the one; but solid delight, with constant obedience are the fruits only of the other.

Sixthly, Those who have the former only, take up their persuasion on false grounds, though the thing itself be true, and they cannot but use it unto false ends and purposes, besides its natural and genuine tendency. For their grounds, they will be discovered when I come to treat of the true nature of gospel-forgiveness: For the end, it is generally used to fill up what is wanting. Self-righteousness

righteouſneſs is their bottom, and when that is too ſhort, or narrow to cover them they piece it out by forgiveneſs. Where conſcience accuſes, this muſt ſupply the defect. Faith lays it on its proper foundation, of which afterwards alſo, and it uſeth it to its proper end, namely, to be the ſole and only ground of our acceptation with God. That is the proper uſe of forgiveneſs, that all may be of grace; for when the foundation is pardon, the whole ſuperſtructure muſt needs be grace. From what hath been ſpoken, it is evident, that notwithſtanding the pretences to the contrary, inſinuated in the objection now removed, it is a great thing to have goſpel-forgiveneſs diſcovered unto a ſoul in a ſaving manner.

The true nature of goſpel-forgiveneſs.----Its relation to the goodneſs, grace, and will of God:----To the blood of Chriſt:----To the promiſe of the goſpel.----The conſiderations of faith about it.

The difficulties that ly in the way of faith's diſcovery of forgiveneſs, whence it appears to be a matter of greater weight and importance than it is commonly apprehended to be, have been inſiſted on in the foregoing diſcourſe. There is yet remaining another ground of the ſame truth; now, this is taken from the nature and greatneſs of the thing itſelf diſcovered, that is, of forgiveneſs. To this end, I ſhall ſhew what it is, wherein it doth conſiſt, what it comprizes and relates unto, according to the importance of the ſecond propoſition before laid down.

I do not, in this place, take forgiveneſs ſtrictly and preciſely for the act of pardoning; nor ſhall I diſpute what that is, and wherein it doth conſiſt. Conſciences that come with ſin-intanglements unto God, know nothing of ſuch diſputes. Nor will this expreſſion, *There is forgiveneſs with God*, bear any ſuch reſtriction, as that it ſhould regard only actual condonation or pardon. That which I have to do, is to enquire into the nature of that pardon, which poor, convinced, troubled ſouls ſeek after,

after, and which the ſcripture propoſeth to them for their relief and reſt. And I ſhall not handle this abſolutely neither, but in relation to the truth under conſideration, namely, That it is a great thing to attain unto a true goſpel-diſcovery of forgiveneſs.

First, As was ſhewed in the opening of the words, the forgiveneſs enquired after, hath relation unto the gracious heart of the Father. Two things I underſtand hereby,

1. The infinite goodneſs and graciouſneſs of his nature.
2. The ſovereign purpoſe of his will and grace.

There is conſiderable in it, the infinite goodneſs of his nature. Sin ſtands in a contrariety unto God, it is a rebellion againſt his ſovereignty, an oppoſition to his holineſs, a provocation to his juſtice, a rejection of his yoke, a caſting off, what lies in the ſinner, of that dependence which a creature hath on its Creator. That God ſhould then have pity and compaſſion on ſinners, in every one of whoſe ſins there is all this evil, and inconceivably more than we can comprehend, it argues an infinitely gracious, good, and loving heart and nature in him. For God doth nothing, but ſuitably to the properties of his nature, and from them, all the acts of his will are the effects of his nature.

Now, whatever God propoſeth as an encouragement for ſinners to come to him, that is of, or hath a ſpecial influence into, the forgiveneſs that is with him; For nothing can encourage a ſinner, as ſuch, but under this conſideration, that it is, or it reſpects forgiveneſs. That this graciouſneſs of God's nature lies at the head or ſpring, and is the root from whence forgiveneſs doth grow, is manifeſt from that ſolemn proclamation which he made of old of his name, and the revelation of his nature therein, for God aſſuredly is, what by himſelf he is called, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs and truth, keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin.* His forgiving of iniquity flows from hence, that, in his nature, he is

merciful, gracious, long-ſuffering, abundant in goodneſs. Were he not ſo, infinite in all theſe, it were vain to look for forgiveneſs from him. Having made this known to be his name, and thereby declared his nature, he, in many places, propoſeth it as a relief, a refuge for ſinners, an encouragement to come unto him, and to wait for mercy from him, Pſal. ix. 10. *They that know thy name, will put their truſt in thee.* It will encourage them ſo to do; others have no foundation for their confidence. But, if this name of God be indeed made known unto us by the Holy Ghoſt, what can hinder why we ſhould not repair unto him, and reſt upon him? So Iſa. l. 10. *Who is among you, that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his ſervant, that walketh in darkneſs, and hath no light, let him truſt in the name of the Lord, and ſtay upon his God.* Not only ſinners, but ſinners in great diſtreſs, are here ſpoken unto. Darkneſs of ſtate or condition, in the ſcripture, denotes every thing of diſconſolation and trouble. To be then in darkneſs, where yet there is ſome light, ſome relief, though darkneſs be predominant, is ſad and diſconſolate; but now, not only to be, but alſo to walk, that is, to continue a courſe in darkneſs, and that with no light, no diſcovery of help or relief; this ſeems an overwhelming condition, yet ſinners, in this eſtate, are called *to truſt in the name of the Lord.* I have ſhewed before, that nothing but forgiveneſs, or that which influenceth it, and encourageth to an expectation of it, is of any uſe unto a ſinner, much more one in ſo great diſtreſs upon the account of ſin; yet is ſuch an one here ſent only to the *name* of the Lord, wherein his gracious heart and nature is revealed. That then the very fountain and ſpring of forgiveneſs: And this is that which John would work a ſenſe of upon our ſouls, where he tells us, that *God is love*, 1 Epiſt. chap. iv. 8. or one of an infinitely gracious, tender, good, compaſſionate, loving nature. Infinite goodneſs and grace is the ſoul wherein forgiveneſs grows. It is impoſſible this flower ſhould ſpring from any other root. Unleſs this be revealed to the ſoul, forgiveneſs is not revealed. To conſider pardon merely as it is terminated in ourſelves,

not

not as it flows from God, will bring neither profit to us, nor glory to God.

And this alſo, which is our deſign in hand, will make it appear, that this diſcovery of forgiveneſs, whereof we ſpeak, is indeed no common thing, is a great diſcovery. Let men come, with a ſenſe of the guilt of ſin, to have deep and ſerious thoughts of God, they will find it no ſuch eaſy and light matter, to have their hearts truly and thoroughly apprehenſive of this loving and gracious nature of God, in reference unto pardon. It is an eaſy matter to ſay ſo in common, but the ſoul will not find it ſo eaſy to believe it for itſelf. What hath been ſpoken before concerning the ingrafted notions that are in the minds of men about the juſtice, holineſs, and ſeverity of God, will here take place. Though men profeſs that God is gracious, yet that averſation which they have unto him, and communion with him, doth abundantly manifeſt that they do not believe what they ſay and profeſs. If they did, they could but delight and truſt in him, which they do not; for *they that know his name, will put their truſt in him.* So ſaid the ſlothful ſervant in the goſpel, *I knew that thou waſt auſtere*, and not for me to deal withal; it may be he profeſſed otherwiſe before, but that lay in his heart when it came to the trial. But this, I ſay, is neceſſary to them, unto whom this diſcovery is to be made, even a ſpiritual apprehenſion of the gracious, loving heart and nature of God. This is the ſpring of all that follows, and the fountain muſt needs be infinitely ſweet from whence ſuch ſtreams do flow. He that conſiders the glorious fabrick of heaven and earth, with the things in them contained, muſt needs conclude that they were the product of infinite wiſdom and power; nothing leſs or under them could have brought forth ſuch an effect. And he that really conſidereth forgiveneſs, and looks on it with a ſpiritual eye, muſt conclude that it comes from infinite goodneſs and grace. And this is that which the hearts of ſinners are exerciſed about, when they come to deal for pardon, Pſal. lxxxvi. 5. *Thou, Lord, art good and ready to for-*

give, Neh. ix. 17. *Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, ſlow to anger, and of great kindneſs.* And Micah vii. 19. *Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity;----becauſe he delighteth in mercy.* And God encourageth them hereunto, wherever he ſays, that he forgives ſins, and blots out iniquities, for his own ſake, or his name's ſake; that is, he will deal with ſinners according to the goodneſs of his own gracious nature. So Hoſ. xi. 9 *I will not execute the fierceneſs of mine anger, I will not return to deſtroy Ephraim, for I am God, and not man* Were there no more mercy, grace, compaſſion, to be ſhewed in this caſe, than it is poſſible ſhould be treaſured in the heart of a man, it would be impoſſible that Ephraim ſhould be ſpared; but, ſaith he, *I am God, and not man*; conſider the infinite largeneſs, bounty, and goodneſs of the heart of God, and there is yet hope. When a ſinner is in good earneſt ſeeking after forgiveneſs, there is nothing he is more ſollicitous about than the heart of God towards him, nothing that he more labours to have a diſcovery of, there is nothing that ſin and Satan labour more to hide from him; this he rolls in his mind, and exerciſes his thoughts about, and if ever that voice of God, Iſa. xxvii. 4. *Fury is not in me*, ſound in his heart, he is relieved from his great diſtreſſes. And the fear of our hearts in this matter, our Saviour ſeems to intend the prevention, or a removal of, John xvi. 26, 27. *I ſay not that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himſelf loveth you.* They had good thoughts of the tender heart and care of Chriſt himſelf, the Mediator, towards them; but what is the heart of the Father, what acceptance ſhall they find with him? Will Chriſt pray that they may find favour with him? Why, ſaith he, as to the love of his heart, there is no need of it, *for the Father himſelf loveth you.* If this then belongeth to forgiveneſs, as who ever hath ſought for it, knoweth that it doth, it is certainly no common diſcovery to have it revealed unto us.

To have all the clouds and darkneſs that are raiſed by

by sin, between us and the throne of God, dispelled; to have the fire and storms, the tempest that are kindled and stirred up about him by the law removed; to have his glorious face unvailed, and his holy heart laid open, and a view given of those infinite treasures and stores of goodness, mercy, love, and kindness, which have had an unchangeable habitation therein from all eternity; to have a discovery of these eternal springs of forbearance and forgiveness, is that which none but Christ can accomplish and bring about, John xvii. 6.

Secondly, This is not all. This eternal ocean, that is infinitely satisfied with its own fulness and perfection, doth not naturally yield forth streams for our refreshment. Mercy and pardon do not come forth from God, as light doth from the sun, or water from the sea, by a necessary consequence of their natures, whether they will or no. It doth not necessarily follow, that any one must be made partaker of forgiveness, because God is infinitely gracious: For, may not he do what he will with his own? *Who hath given first unto him, that it should be recompensed unto him again?* Rom. xi. 35. All the fruits of God's goodness, and grace, are in the sole keeping of his own sovereign will and pleasure. This is his great glory, Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19. *Shew me thy glory*, saith Moses. *And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.* Upon that proclamation of the name of God, that he is merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness, some might conclude that it could not be otherwise with any but well; he is such a one, that men need scarce be beholden to him for mercy; nay, saith he, but this is my great glory, that *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.* There must be an interposition of a free act of the will of God, to deal with us according to his abundant goodness, or we can have no interest therein. This I call the purpose of his grace, or the *good pleasure that he hath purposed in himself,*

himſelf, Eph. i. 9. or as it is termed, ver: 5, 6. *The good pleaſure of his will, that he hath purpoſed, to the praiſe of his glorious grace.* This free and gracious pleaſure of God, or purpoſe of his will, to act towards ſinners according to his own abundant goodneſs, is another thing that influences the forgiveneſs of which we treat. Pardon flows immediately from a ſovereign act of free grace. This free purpoſe of God's will and grace, for the pardoning of ſinners, is indeed that which is principally intended, when we ſay, *There is forgiveneſs with him.* That is, he is pleaſed to forgive; and ſo to do is agreeable unto his nature. Now, the myſtery of this grace is deep, it is eternal, and therefore incomprehenſible. Few there are whoſe hearts are raiſed to a contemplation of it. Men reſt and content themſelves in a general notion of mercy, which will not be advantageous to their ſouls; freed they would be from puniſhment, but what it is to be forgiven they enquire not. So what they know of it they come eaſily by, but will find in the iſſue, it will ſtand them in little ſtead. But theſe fountains of God's actings are revealed, that they may be the fountains of our comforts.

Now, of this purpoſe of God's grace, there are ſeveral acts, all of them relating unto goſpel-forgiveneſs.

Firſt, There is his purpoſe of ſending his Son to be the great means of procuring, of purchaſing forgiveneſs. Though God be infinitely and incomprehenſibly gracious, though he purpoſe to exert his grace and goodneſs towards ſinners, yet he will ſo do it, do it in ſuch a way, as ſhall not be prejudicial to his own holineſs and righteouſneſs. His juſtice muſt be ſatisfied, and his holy indignation againſt ſin made known; wherefore he purpoſeth to ſend his Son, and hath ſent him, to make way for the exerciſe of mercy, ſo as no way to eclipſe the glory of his juſtice, holineſs, and hatred of ſin. Better we ſhould all eternally come ſhort of forgiveneſs, than that God ſhould loſe any thing of his glory. This we have, Rom. iii. 25. *God ſet him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteouſneſs for the*

the remiſſion of ſins that are paſt. The remiſſion of ſins is the thing aimed at, but this muſt be ſo brought about, as that therein not only the mercy, but the righteouſneſs of God may be declared; and therefore muſt it be brought forth by a propitiation, or making of an atonement in the blood of Chriſt. So John iii. 16. 1 John iv. 9. Rom. v. 8. This, I ſay, alſo lies in the myſtery of that forgiveneſs that is adminiſtered in the goſpel; it comes from this eternal purpoſe of making way, by the blood of Chriſt to the diſpenſation of pardon: And this greatly heightens the excellency of this diſcovery. Men who have ſlight thoughts of God, whoſe hearts were never awed with his dread or greatneſs, who never ſeriouſly conſidered his purity and holineſs, may think it no great matter that God ſhould pardon ſin; but do they conſider the way whereby it is to be brought about, even by ſending of his only Son, and that to die, as we ſhall ſee afterwards? Neither was there any other way whereby it might be done. Let us now lay aſide common thoughts, aſſent upon reports and tradition, and rightly weigh this matter; doubtleſs we ſhall find it to be a great thing, that forgiveneſs ſhould be ſo with God, as to be made out unto us (we know ſomewhat what we are) by ſending his only Son to die. Oh! how little is this really believed, even by them who make a profeſſion of it? and what mean thoughts are entertained about it, when men ſeek for pardon? Immunity from puniſhment is the utmoſt that lies in the aims and deſires of moſt, and is all that they are exerciſed in the conſideration of, when they deal with God about ſin. Such men think, and will do ſo, that we have an eaſy task in hand, namely, to prove that there is forgiveneſs in God; but this eaſe lies in their own ignorance and darkneſs. If ever they come to ſearch after it, indeed, to enquire into the nature, reaſon, cauſes, fountain and ſprings of it, they will be able to give another account of theſe things. Chriſt is the centre of the myſtery of the goſpel, and forgiveneſs is laid up in the heart of Chriſt, from the love of the Father; in him are all the treaſures of it hid:

hid: And ſurely it is no ſmall thing to have the heart of Chriſt revealed unto us. When believers deal about pardon, their faith exerciſes itſelf about this, that God, with whom the ſoul hath to do, hath ſent the Lord Chriſt to die, for this end, that it may be freely given out. General notions of impunity they dwell not on, they paſs not for; they have a cloſer converſe with God, than to be ſatisfied with ſuch thoughts. They enquire into the graciouſneſs of his nature, and the good pleaſure of his will, the purpoſe of his grace; they ponder and look into the myſtery of his wiſdom and love in ſending his Son. If theſe ſprings be not clear unto them, the ſtreams will yield them but little refreſhment. It is not enough that we ſeek after ſalvation, but we are to enquire, and ſearch diligently, into the nature and manner of it. Theſe are the things that the *angels deſire to bow down and look into*, 1 Pet. i. 11, 12, 13. And ſome think, if they have got a form of words about them, they have gotten a ſufficient comprehenſion of them. It is, doubtleſs, one reaſon why many, who truly believe, do yet ſo fluctuate about forgiveneſs all their days, that they never exerciſed faith to look into the ſprings of it, its eternal fountains; but have merely dwelt on actual condonation. However, I ſay, theſe things ly utterly out of the conſideration of the common pretenders to an acquaintance with the truth we have in hand.

Secondly, There is another ſovereign act of God's will to be conſidered in this matter, and that is, his eternal deſignation of the perſons who ſhall be made partakers of this mercy. He hath not left this thing to hazard and uncertainties, that it ſhould, as it were, be unknown to him who ſhould be pardoned, and who not. Nay, none ever are made partakers of forgiveneſs, but thoſe whom he hath eternally and graciouſly deſigned thereunto. So the apoſtle declares it, Eph. i. 5, 6, 7. the riſe, is his eternal predeſtination; the end, the glory of his grace; the means, redemption in the blood of Chriſt; the thing itſelf, forgiveneſs of ſins. None ever

ever are or can be made partakers thereof, but by virtue of this act of God's will and grace; which thereupon hath a peculiar influence into it, and is to be respected in the consideration of it. I know this may be abused by pride, profaneness and unbelief, and so may the whole work of God's grace; and so it is, even the blood of Christ, in an especial manner; but, in its proper place and use, it hath a signal influence into the glory of God, and the consolation of the souls of men.

There are also other acts of this purpose of God's grace, as of giving sinners unto Christ, and giving sinners an interest in Christ, which I shall not insist upon, because the nature of them is sufficiently discovered in that one, explained already.

THIRDLY, Forgiveness hath respect unto the propitiation made in and by the blood of Christ the Son of God: This was declared in the opening of the words. Indeed here lies the knot and centre of gospel-forgiveness; it flows from the cross, and springs out of the grave of Christ.

Thus Elihu describes it, Job xxxiii. 24. *God is gracious unto him, and saith, deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom.* The whole of what is aimed at, lies in these words. 1. There is God's gracious and merciful heart towards a sinner; *He is gracious unto him.* 2. There is actual condonation itself, of which we shall treat afterwards; *He saith, deliver him from going down to the pit.* And, 3. There is the centre of the whole, wherein God's gracious heart and actual pardon do meet, and that is the ransom, the propitiation or atonement, that is the blood of Christ, of which we speak, *I have found a ransom.*

The same is expressed, Isa. liii. 11. *My righteous servant shall justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.* Of the justification of sinners, absolution or pardon is the first part: This ariseth from Christ's bearing their iniquities. Therein he *finished transgression, made an end of sin, and made reconciliation for iniquity,* Dan. ix. 24.

Even all the ſacrifices, and ſo conſequently the whole worſhip of the Old Teſtament, evinced this relation between forgiveneſs and blood-ſhedding; whence the apoſtle concludes, that without *ſhedding of blood there is no remiſſion*, Heb. ix. 22. that is, all pardon ariſeth from blood-ſhedding, even of the blood of the Son of God. So that we are ſaid to have *redemption, even the forgiveneſs of ſins*, Eph. i. 17. Our redemption in his blood is our forgiveneſs, not that we are all actually pardoned in the blood of his croſs, for thereunto muſt be added goſpel-condonation, of which afterwards; but thereby it is procured, the grant of pardon is therein ſealed, and ſecurity given, that it ſhall in due time be made unto us. To which purpoſe is that diſcourſe of the apoſtle, Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26. The work there mentioned, proceeds from grace, is managed to the intereſt of righteouſneſs, is carried on by the blood of Chriſt and iſſues in forgiveneſs Now the blood of Chriſt relates variouſly to the pardon of ſin.

Firſt, Pardon is purchaſed and procured by it. Our redemption is our forgiveneſs; as the cauſe contains the effect. No ſoul is pardoned but with reſpect unto the blood of Chriſt, as the procuring cauſe of that pardon. Hence he is ſaid to *have waſhed us in his blood*, Rev i. 5. *In himſelf, to have purged our ſins*, Heb. i. 3. by *one offering to have taken away ſin, and for ever to have perfected them that are ſanctified*, Heb. x. to be the *ranſom and propitiation* of our ſins, 1 John ii. 2. to have made *an end of ſin*, Dan. ix. 24. and to have *made reconciliation for the ſins of his people*, Heb. ii. 17. God hath encloſed his rich ſtores of pardon and mercy in the blood of Jeſus Chriſt.

Secondly, Becauſe in his blood the promiſe of pardon is ratified and confirmed, ſo that nothing is wanting to our compleat forgiveneſs, but our pleading the promiſe by faith in him, 2 Cor. i. 20. *All the promiſes of God are in him Yea, and in him Amen;* that is, faithfully, and irrecoverably, and immutably eſtabliſhed. And therefore the apoſtle having told us, that this is the covenant

of

of God, that he *would be merciful to our sins and iniquities.* Heb. viii. 12. He informs us, that in the undertaking of Christ, this covenant is become a testament, chap. ix. 15, 16, 17. So ratified in his blood, that mercy and forgiveness of sin is irrevocably confirmed unto us therein.

Thirdly, Because he hath in his own person, as the head of the church, received an acquitment for the whole body: His personal discharge upon the accomplishment of his work was a pledge of the discharge which was in due time to be given to his whole mystical body. Peter tells, Acts ii. 24. that *it was impossible he should be detained by death.* And why so? because death being penally inflicted on him, when he had paid the debt, he was legally acquitted. Now, for whom, and in whose name and stead he suffered; for them, and in their name and stead, he received his acquitment.

Fourthly, Because upon his death, God the Father hath committed unto him the whole management of the business of forgiveness, Acts v. 31. *He* (now) *gives repentance and the forgiveness of sins.* It is Christ that forgives us, Col. iii. 13. All forgiveness is now at his disposal, and he pardoneth whom he will, even all that are given unto him of the Father, not casting out any that come to God by him. He is intrusted with all the stores of his Father's purpose, and his own purchase; and thence tells us, that *all things that the Father hath, are his*, John xvi. 15.

In all these respects doth forgiveness relate to the blood of Christ. Mercy, pardon and grace, could find no other way to issue forth from the heart of the Father, but by the heart blood of the Son, and so do they stream unto the heart of the sinner.

Two things are principally to be considered in the respect that forgiveness hath to the blood of Christ. 1. The way of its procurement. 2. The way of its administration by him. The first is deep, mysterious, dreadful. It was by his blood, the blood of the cross, the travel of his soul, his undergoing wrath and curse.

The other is gracious, merciful and tender; whence ſo many things are ſpoken of his mercifulneſs, and faithfulneſs, to encourage us to expect forgiveneſs from him.

This alſo adds to the myſterious depths of forgiveneſs; and makes its diſcovery a great matter. The ſoul that looks after it in earneſt, muſt conſider what it coſt. How light do moſt men make of pardon? What an eaſy thing is it to be acquainted with it? And no very hard matter to obtain it. But to hold communion with God, in the blood of his Son, is a thing of another nature than is once dreamed of by many, who think they know well enough what it is to be pardoned. *God is merciful,* is a common ſaying, and as common, to deſire he would be ſo *for Chriſt's ſake.* Poor creatures are caſt into the mould of ſuch expreſſions, who know neither God, nor mercy, nor Chriſt, nor any thing of the myſtery of the goſpel. Others look on the outſide of the croſs, to ſee into the myſtery of the love of the Father, working in the blood of the Mediator, to conſider by faith the great tranſaction of divine wiſdom, juſtice, and mercy therein, how few attain unto it? To come unto God, by Chriſt, for forgiveneſs, and therein to behold the law iſſuing all its threats and curſes in his blood, and loſing its ſting, putting an end to its obligation unto puniſhment, in the croſs; to ſee all ſins gathered up in the hands of God's juſtice, and made to meet on the Mediator, and eternal love ſpringing forth triumphantly from his blood, flouriſhing into pardon, grace, mercy, forgiveneſs. This the heart of a ſinner can be enlarged unto, only by the Spirit of God.

Fourthly, There is in forgiveneſs, free condonation, diſcharge, or pardon, according to the tenor of the goſpel; and this may be conſidered two ways.

Firſt, As it lies in the promiſe itſelf; and ſo it is God's gracious declaration of pardon to ſinners, in and by the blood of Chriſt, his covenant to that end and purpoſe; which is variouſly propoſed, according as he knew

knew needful for all the ends and purpoſes of ingenerating faith, and communicating that conſolation which he intends therein.

This is the law of his grace, the declaration of the myſtery of his love, before inſiſted on.

Secondly, There is the bringing home, and application of all this mercy to the ſoul of a ſinner by the Holy Ghoſt, wherein we are *freely forgiven all our treſpaſſes*, Col. ii. 13.

Goſpel-forgiveneſs, I ſay, reſpects all theſe things, theſe principles, they have all an influence into it. And that which makes this more evident, wherewith I ſhall cloſe this conſideration of the nature of it, is, that faith, in its application of itſelf unto God about and for forgiveneſs, doth diſtinctly apply itſelf unto, and cloſe with, ſometimes one of theſe ſeverally and ſingly, ſometimes another, and ſometimes jointly takes in the conſideration of them all expreſly. Not that at any time it fixes on any or either of them excluſively to the others, but that eminently it finds ſome ſpecial encouragement at ſome ſeaſon, and ſome peculiar attractive from ſome one of them, more than from the reſt; and then that proves an inlet, a door of entrance, unto the treaſures that are laid up in the reſt of them Let us go over the ſeverals by inſtances.

1*ſt*, Sometimes faith fixes upon the name and infinite goodneſs of the nature of God, and draws out forgiveneſs from thence. So doth the pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxxxvi. 6. *Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive.* He rolls himſelf, in the purſuit and expectation of pardon, on the infinite goodneſs of the nature of God. So Neh. ix. 17. *Thou art a God of pardons*, or ready to forgive; of an infinite, gracious, loving nature, not ſevere and wrathful; and this is that which we are encouraged unto, Iſa. l. 10. to *ſtay on the name of God*, as in innumerable other places.

And thus faith oftentimes finds a peculiar ſweetneſs and encouragement in and from the conſideration of God's gracious nature. Sometimes this is the firſt thing that

that it fixes on, and ſometimes the laſt that it reſts in; and oft-times it makes a ſtay here, when it is driven from all other holds: It can ſay, however it be, yet God is gracious, and at leaſt make that concluſion which we have from it, Joel. ii. 13, 14. *God is gracious and merciful, who knoweth but he will return.* And when faith hath well laid hold on this conſideration, it will not eaſily be driven from its expectation of relief and forgiveneſs, even from hence.

2*dly*, Sometimes the ſoul by faith addreſſeth itſelf in a peculiar manner to the ſovereignty of God's will; whereby he is gracious to whom he will be gracious, and merciful to whom he will be merciful, which, as was ſhewed, is another conſiderable ſpring or principle of forgiveneſs. This way David's faith ſteered him in his great ſtrait and perplexity, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. *If I ſhall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again; but if he thus ſay, I have no delight in thee, behold here am I, let him do unto me as ſeemeth good unto him.* That which he hath in conſideration is, Whether God have any delight in him or no? that is, whether God would graciouſly remit and pardon the great ſin againſt which, at that time, he manifeſted his indignation. Here he lays himſelf down before the ſovereign grace of God, and awaits patiently the diſcovery of the free act of his will concerning him; and at this door, as it were, enters into the conſideration of thoſe other ſprings of pardon, which faith enquires after, and cloſeth withal. This ſometimes is all the cloud that appears to a diſtreſſed ſoul, which after a while fills the heavens by the addition of the other conſiderations mentioned, and yields plentifully refreſhing ſhowers. And this condition is a ſin-intangled ſoul oft-times reduced unto, in looking out for relief, it can diſcover nothing but this, that God is able, and can, if he graciouſly pleaſe, relieve and acquit him. All other ſupportments, all ſprings of relief are ſhut up, or hid from him. The ſprings indeed may be nigh, as that was to Hagar, but their eyes are withheld, that they cannot ſee them.

Wherefore,

Wherefore they cast themselves on God's sovereign pleasure, and say with Job, *Though he slay us, we will put our trust in him*, we will not let him go. In ourselves we are lost, that is unquestionable; how the Lord will deal with us we know not, we see not our signs and tokens any more, evidences of God's grace in us, or of his love and favour unto us, are all out of sight. To a present special interest in Christ we are strangers; and we ly every moment at the door of eternity; what course shall we take, what way shall we proceed? If we abide at a distance from God, we shall assuredly perish: Who ever hardened himself against him and prospered? Nor is there the least relief to be had but from and by him: For who can forgive sins but God? We will then bring our guilty souls into his presence, and attend the pleasure of his grace, what he speaks concerning us, we will willingly submit unto. And this sometimes proves an anchor to a tossed soul, which, though it gives not rest and peace, yet it saves it from the rock of despair. Here it abides until light do more and more break forth upon it

3*dly*, Faith dealing about forgiveness, doth commonly eye, in a peculiar manner, its relation to the mediation and blood of Christ. So the apostle directs, 1 John ii. 2. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins.* If any one hath sinned, and is in depths and entanglements about it, what course shall he take, how shall he proceed to obtain deliverance? why, he must unto God for pardon: But what shall he rely upon to encourage him in his so doing? Saith the apostle, Consider by faith the atonement and propitiation made for sin by the blood of Christ; and that he is still pursuing the work of love, to the suing out of pardon for us, and rest thy soul thereon. This, I say, most commonly is that which faith, in the first place, immediately fixes on.

4*thly*, Faith eyes actual pardon or condonation. So God propoſeth it as a motive to further believing, Isa. xliv.

xliv. 22. *I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy tranſgreſſions, and as a cloud thy ſins; return unto me, for I have redeemed thee.* Actual pardon of ſin is propoſed to faith, as an encouragement unto a full returning unto God in all things, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. And the like may be ſaid of all the other particulars which we have inſiſted on. There is not any of them, but will yield peculiar relief unto a ſoul dealing with God about forgiveneſs, as having ſome one ſpecial concernment or other of forgiveneſs inwrapped in them. Only, as I ſaid, they do it not excluſively, but are the ſpecial doors, whereby believing enters into the whole. And theſe things muſt be ſpoken unto afterwards.

Let us now take along with us, the end for which all theſe conſiderations have been inſiſted on. It is to manifeſt, that a real diſcovery of goſpel-forgiveneſs, is a matter of greater conſequence and importance than at firſt propoſal, it may be, it appeared unto ſome to be. Who is not in hopes, in expectation of pardon? who thinks not that they who know well enough, at leaſt what it is, if they might but obtain it? But men may have general thoughts of impunity, and yet be far enough from any ſaving acquaintance with goſpel-mercy.

Forgiveneſs diſcovered, or revealed only to faith.---- Reaſons thereof.

For a cloſe of this diſcourſe, I ſhall only add what is included in that propoſition which is the foundation of the whole; namely, "That this diſcovery of forgive-"neſs is, and can be made to faith alone." The nature of it is ſuch, as that nothing elſe can diſcover it, or receive it. No reaſonings, no enquiries of the heart of man can reach unto it. That gueſs or glimpſe which the heathens had of old of ſomewhat ſo called, and which falſe-worſhippers have at preſent, is not the forgiveneſs we inſiſt upon, but a mere imagination of their own hearts.

This the apoſtle informs us, Rom. i. 17. *The righteouſneſs*

ouſneſs of God, is (in the goſpel) *revealed from faith to faith.* Nothing but faith hath any thing to do with it. It is that righteouſneſs of God whereof he ſpeaks, that conſiſts in the forgiveneſs of ſins by the blood of Chriſt, declared in the goſpel. And this is revealed from the faith of God in the promiſe, to the faith of the believer, to him that mixes the promiſe with faith. And again more fully, 1 Cor. ii. 9. *Eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* The ways whereby we come to the knowledge of any thing, are by the ſeeing of the eye, or the hearing of the ear, or the reaſonings and meditations of the heart: but now, none of theſe will reach to the matter in hand; by none of theſe ways can we come to an acquaintance with the things of the goſpel that are prepared for us in Chriſt. How then ſhall we obtain the knowledge of them? that he declares, ver. 10. *God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.* Now, it is faith only that receives the revelations of the Spirit; nothing elſe hath to do with them.

To give evidence hereunto, we may conſider that this great myſtery,

Firſt, Is too deep.

Secondly, It is too great, for ought elſe to diſcover: And,

Thirdly, That nothing elſe but faith is ſuited to the making of this diſcovery.

Firſt, It is too deep and myſterious to be fathomed and reached by any thing elſe. Reaſon's line is too ſhort to fathom the depths of the Father's love, of the blood of the Son, and the promiſes of the goſpel built thereon, wherein forgiveneſs dwells. Men cannot, by their rational conſiderations, launch out into theſe deeps, nor draw water, by them, from theſe wells of ſalvation. Reaſon ſtands by amazed, and cries, How can theſe things be? It can but gather cockle-ſhells, like him of old, at the ſhore of this ocean; a few criticiſms upon the outward letter; and ſo bring an evil report upon the land, as did

the ſpies. All it can do, is but to hinder faith from venturing into it; crying, Spare thyſelf, this attempt is vain, theſe things are impoſſible. It is among the things that faith puts off, and lays aſide, when it engageth the ſoul into this great work. This then, that it may come to a diſcovery of forgiveneſs, cauſeth the ſoul to deny itſelf, and all its own reaſonings, and to give up itſelf to an infinite fulneſs of goodneſs and truth. Though it cannot go into the bottom of theſe depths, yet it enters into them, and finds reſt in them. Nothing but faith is ſuited to reſt, to ſatiate, and content itſelf, in myſterious, bottomleſs, unſearchable depths. Being a ſoul-emptying, a reaſon-denying grace, the more it meets withal, beyond its search and reach, the more ſatisfaction it finds. This is that which I looked for, ſaith faith, even for that which is infinite and unſearchable: When I know that there is abundantly more beyond me, that I do not comprehend, than what I have attained unto; for I know that nothing elſe will do good to the ſoul. Now, this is that which really puzzles and overwhelms reaſon, rendering it uſeleſs. What it cannot compaſs, it will neglect or deſpiſe. It is either amazed and confounded, and dazled like weak eyes at too great a light, or fortifying of itſelf by inbred pride and obſtinacy; it concludes, that this preaching of the croſs, of forgiveneſs from the love of God, by the blood of Chriſt, is plain folly, a thing not for a wiſe man to take notice of, or to trouble himſelf about: So it appeared to the wiſe Greeks of old, 1 Cor. i. 24. Hence, when a ſoul is brought under the power of a real conviction of ſin, ſo as that it would deſirouſly be freed from the galling entanglements of it, it is then the hardeſt thing in the world to perſuade ſuch a ſoul of this forgiveneſs. Any thing appears more rational unto it, any ſelf-righteouſneſs in this world, any purgatory hereafter.

The greateſt part of the world of convinced perſons have forſaken forgiveneſs on this account; maſſes, penances, merits, have appeared more eligible. Yea, men who have no other deſire but to be forgiven, do

chuſe

chuſe to cloſe with any thing rather than forgiveneſs. If men do eſcape theſe rocks, and reſolve that nothing but pardon will relieve them, yet it is impoſſible for them to receive it in the truth and power of it, if not enabled by faith thereunto. I ſpeak not of men that take it up by hearſay, as a common report, but of thoſe ſouls who find themſelves really concerned to look after it; when they know it is their ſole concernment, all their hope and relief; when they know that they muſt periſh everlaſtingly without it; and when it is declared unto them in the words of truth and ſoberneſs, yet they cannot receive it: What is the reaſon of it? What ſtaves off theſe hungry creatures from their proper food? Why, they have nothing to lead them into the myſterious depths of eternal love, of the blood of Chriſt, and promiſes of the goſpel: How may we ſee poor diſeaſed ſouls ſtanding every day at the ſide of this pool, and yet not once venture themſelves into it all their days?

Secondly, It is too great for any thing elſe to diſcover. Forgiveneſs is a thing choſen out of God from all eternity, to exalt and magnify the glory of his grace, and it will be made appear to all the world at the day of judgment, to have been a great thing. When the ſoul comes, in any meaſure, to be made ſenſible of it, it finds it ſo great, ſo excellent and aſtoniſhable, that it ſinks under the thoughts of it. It hath dimenſions, a length, breadth, depth, and height, that no line of the rational ſoul can take or meaſure. There is exceeding greatneſs in it, Eph. i. 19. That this is a great work which we have preſcribed, Eph. iii. 19. Even *to know the love of Chriſt that paſſeth knowledge.* Here, I ſuppoſe, reaſon will confeſs itſelf at a ſtand, and an iſſue; to know that which paſſeth knowledge, is none of its work. It cannot be known, ſaith reaſon, and ſo ends the matter But this is faith's proper work, even to know that which paſſeth knowledge. To know that, in its power, virtue, ſweetneſs, and efficacy, which cannot be thoroughly known in its nature and excellency; to have, by believing, all the ends of a full comprehenſion of that

which cannot be fully comprehended. Hence, Heb. xi. 1. it is said to be the ὑπόστασις *of things not seen;* their subsistence, though in themselves absent, yet faith gives them a present subsistence in the soul. So it knows things that pass knowledge, by mixing itself with them, it draws out, and communicates their benefit to the soul. From all which it is evident, what in the

Third Place was proposed of faith's being only suited to be the means of this discovery, so that I shall not need farther to insist thereon.

Discovery of forgiveness in God a great supportment to sin-intangled souls.----Particular assurance attainable.

There yet remains a brief confirmation of the position at first laid down, and thus cleared, before I come to the improvement of the words especially aimed at. I say then, this discovery of forgiveness in God, is a great supportment for a sin-intangled soul, although it hath no special persuasion of its own particular interest therein. Somewhat is supposed in this assertion, and somewhat affirmed.

First, It is supposed, that there may be a gracious persuasion and assurance of faith, in a man, concerning his own particular interest in forgiveness. A man may, many do, believe it for themselves, so as not only to have the benefit of it, but the comfort also. Generally all the saints mentioned in scripture had this assurance, unless it were in the cafe of depths, distresses, and desertions, such as that in this psalm. David expresseth his confidence of the love and favour of God unto his own soul hundreds of times, Paul doth the some for himself, Gal. ii. 20. *Christ loved* ME *and gave himself* FOR ME, 2 Tim. iv. 8. *There is laid up* FOR ME *a crown of righteousness, which God the righteous judge shall give* ME *at that day.* And that this boasting in the Lord

Lord and his grace, was not an inclosure to himself, he shews, Rom. viii. 38, 39.

Nothing can be more vain, than what is usually pleaded to remove this sheat-anchor of the saints consolation; namely, that no man's particular name is in the promise: It is not said, to this or that man by name, that his sins are forgiven him; but the matter is far otherwise. To think that it is necessary, that the names whereby we are known among ourselves, and are distinguished here one from another, should be written in the promise, that we may believe in particular every child of God is in the promise; and believing makes it very legible to him. Yea, we find by experience that there is no need of argumentation in this case. The soul, by a direct act of faith, believes its own forgiveness, without making inferences, or gathering conclusions; and may do so, upon the proposition of it to be believed in the promise. But I will not digress from my work in hand; and therefore shall only observe one or two things upon the supposition laid down.

First, It is the duty of every believer, to labour after an assurance of a personal interest in forgiveness; and to be diligent in the cherishing and preservation of it when it is attained. The apostle exhorts us all unto it, Heb. x. 22. *Let us draw near in full assurance of faith;* that is, of our acceptance with God through forgiveness in the blood of Jesus. This he plainly discourseth of. And this principle of our faith and confidence, he would have us to hold fast unto the end, chap. iii. 14. It is no small evil in believers not to be pressing after perfection in believing and obedience. Oftimes some sinful indulgence to self, or the world, or sloth, is the cause of it. Hence few come up to gospel assurance. But yet most of our privileges, and upon the matter all our comforts, depend on this one thing. A little by the way, to encourage unto this duty, I shall desire you to consider, both whence this assurance is produced, and what it doth produce; what it is the fruit of, and what fruit it bears.

1*st*, It

1*ſt*, It is in general the product of a more plentifull communication of the ſpirit than ordinary, as to a ſenſe and participation of the choice fruits of the death of Chriſt, procured for thoſe who are juſtified by their acceptance of the atonement.

It flouriſheth not without his ſealing, witneſſing, eſtabliſhing, and ſhedding abroad, the love of God in our hearts. See Rom. v. 2, 3, 4, 5. And what believer ought not to long for, and preſs after, the enjoyment of theſe things. Nay, to read of theſe things in the goſpel, not experiencing them in our own hearts, and yet to ſit down quietly on this ſide of them, without continual preſſing after them, is to deſpiſe the blood of Chriſt, the ſpirit of grace, and the whole work of God's love. If there are no ſuch things, the goſpel is not true; if there are, if we preſs not after them, we are deſpiſers of the goſpel. Surely he hath not the ſpirit, who would not have more of him, all of him that is promiſed by Chriſt. Theſe things are the hundredfold that Chriſt hath left us in the world, to counterpoiſe our ſorrows, troubles and loſſes; and ſhall we be ſo fooliſh as to neglect our only abiding riches and treaſures? In particular, as it is the product of an exerciſed, vigorous, active faith; that our faith ſhould be ſuch, always in every ſtate and condition, I ſuppoſe it our duty to endeavour. Not only our comforts, but our obedience alſo depends upon it. The more faith, that is true, and of the right kind, the more obedience. For all our obedience, is the obedience of faith.

2*dly*, For its own fruit, and what it produceth, they are the choiceſt actings of our ſouls towards God; as love, delight, rejoicing in the Lord, peace, joy and conſolation in ourſelves, readineſs to do, or ſuffer, cheerfulneſs in ſo doing. If they grow not from this root, yet their flouriſhing wholly depends upon it. So that ſurely it is the duty of every believer to break thro' all difficulties in preſſing after this particular aſſurance. The objections that perſons raiſe againſt themſelves, in this caſe, may be afterwards conſidered.

Secondly,

Secondly, In ordinary dispensations of God towards us, and dealings with us, it is mostly our own negligence and sloth that we come short of this assurance. It is true it depends in a peculiar manner on the sovereignty of God; he is as absolute in giving peace to believers, as in giving grace to sinners. This takes place, and may be proposed as a relief in times of trials and distress: He createth light, and causeth darkness, as he pleaseth. But yet, considering what promises are made unto us; what encouragements are given us; what love and tenderness there is in God to receive us, I cannot but conclude, that ordinarily the cause of our coming short of this assurance is where I have fixed it. And this is the first thing that is supposed, in the foregoing assertion.

Secondly, It is supposed, that there is, or may be a saving perswasion or discovery of forgiveness in God, where there is no assurance of any particular interest therein; or that our own sins in particular are pardoned. This is that which hath a promise of gracious acceptance with God, and is therefore saving, Isa. l. 10. *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light; let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.* Here is the fear of the Lord and obedience, with a blessed encouragement to rest in God, and his All-sufficiency, yet no assurance, nor light, but darkness, and that walked in, or continued in for a long season. For he cannot walk in darkness, meet with nothing but darkness, without any beam or ray of light, as the words signify, who is persuaded of the love of God in the pardon of his sins. And yet the faith of such an one, and his obedience springing from it, have this gracious promise of acceptance with God. And inumerable testimonies to this purpose might be produced, and instances in great plenty. I shall only tender a little evidence unto it, in one observation concerning the nature of faith, and one more, about the

the propoſal of the thing to be believed, or forgiveneſs. And.

Firſt, Faith is called, and is a *cleaving unto the Lord,* Deut. iv. 4. *Ye that did cleave,* or adhere *unto the Lord;* that is who did believe. Joſh. xxiii. 8. *cleave* or adhere *unto the Lord your God.* The ſame word is uſed alſo in the new teſtament, Acts xi. 23. *He exhorted them that with purpoſe of heart they would cleave unto the Lord,* or continue ſtedfaſt in believing. It is alſo often expreſt by truſting in the Lord, rolling our burden, or caſting our care upon him, by committing ourſelves, or our ways to him. Now, all this goes no further than the ſoul's reſignation of itſelf unto God, to be dealt withal by him acccording to the tenour of the covenant of grace, ratified in the blood of Chriſt: This a ſoul cannot do without a diſcovery of forgiveneſs in God, but this a ſoul may do, without a ſpecial aſſurance of his own intereſt therein. This faith that thus adheres to God, that cleaves to him, will carry men to conclude, that it is their duty, and their wiſdom, to give up the diſpoſal of their ſouls unto God, and to cleave and adhere unto him, as revealed in Chriſt, waiting the pleaſure of his will: It enables them to make Chriſt their choice; and ſtill carry men to heaven ſafely, though it may be at ſome ſeaſons, not very comfortably.

Secondly, The revelation and diſcovery of forgiveneſs, that is made in the goſpel, evidenceth the ſame truth. The firſt propoſal of it, or concerning it, is not to any man, that his ſins are forgiven. No, but it is only that there is redemption and forgiveneſs of ſins in Chriſt. So the apoſtle lays it down, Acts xiii. 38, 39. *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren. that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveneſs of ſins, and by him all that believe are juſtified from all things, from which they could not be juſtified by the law of* Moſes. All this may be believed, without a man's aſſurance of his own perſonal intereſt in the things mentioned. Now, where they are believed with the faith the goſpel requires, that faith is ſaving, and the root of goſpel acceptable obedi-

obedience. The ransom I say, the atonement by Christ, the fulness of the redemption that is in him, and so forgiveness in his blood for believers, from the good will, grace, and love of the father, is the first gospel discovery that a sinner, in a saving manner, closeth withal. Particular assurance riseth or may arise after words, and this also is supposed in the assertion.

SECONDLY, That which is affirmed in it, is, That a discovery of forgiveness in God, without any particular assurance of personal interest therein, is a great supportment to a sin-entangled soul. And let no man despise the day of this small thing, small in the eyes of some, and those good men also, as if it did not deserve the name of faith. Now, as it hath been made to appear this discovery of forgiveness, is the soul's persuasion, on gospel grounds, that however it be with him, and whatever his state and condition be, or is like to be, yet that God in his own nature is infinitely gracious, and that he hath determined in a sovereign act of his will from eternity to be gracious to sinners; that he hath made way for the administration of forgiveness by the blood of his Son, according as he hath abundantly manifested, and declared in the promises of the gospel. However it be with me, yet thus it is with God; there is forgiveness with him. This is the first thing that a soul in its depths riseth up into: And it is a supportment for it; enabling it unto all present duties, until consolation come from above.

Thus hath it been to, and with the saints of old, Hos. xiv. 3. Ashur *shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods, for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.* A solemn renunciation we have of all other helps, reliefs or assistances, civil or religious, that are not God's. Therein a solemn resolution in their great distress of cleaving unto God alone; both which are great and blessed effects of faith. What is the bottom and foundation of this blessed resolution? namely, that proposition, *In thee the Fatherless findeth mercy;* that is, there is

forgiveness with thee for helpless sinners. This lifted up their hearts in their depths, and supported them in their waiting, unto the receiving of the blessed promises of mercy, pardon, grace and holiness, which ensue in the next verses. Until they came home unto them in their efficacy and effects, they made a life on this, *In thee the fatherless findeth mercy.*

The state and condition of things seem to ly yet lower in that proposal we have, Joel ii. 13, 14. *Rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil; who knoweth if he will return, and repent, and leave a blessing.* That which is proposed to the faith of those here spoken unto, is, that the Lord is gracious and merciful; that there is forgiveness in him. The duty they are provoked unto hereupon is gospel-repentance. The assent unto the proposition demanded, as to their own interest, amounts but unto this, who knows, but that the Lord may return and leave a blessing; or deal with us according to the manifestation he hath made of himself, that he is merciful and gracious. This is far enough from any comfortable persuasion of a particular interest in that grace, mercy or pardon. But yet, saith the prophet, Come but thus far, and here is a firm foundation of dealing with God about further discoveries of himself, in a way of grace and mercy. When a soul sees so much in God, as to conclude; well, who knoweth but that he may return, and have mercy upon me also, it will support him, and give him an entrance into further light.

The church in the Lamentations gives a sad account of her state and condition in this matter. For she maketh that hard conclusion against herself, chap. iii. 18. *My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord. And when I cry and shout, he shuts out my prayer,* ver. 8. So far is she from a comfortable persuasion of a particular interest in mercy and acceptance. that under her pressures, and in her temptations, she is ready positively to

to determine on the other ſide, namely, that ſhe is rejected and caſt off for ever. What courſe ſhall we then take? Shall we give over waiting on God, and ſay there is no hope? No, ſaith ſhe, I will not take that way; for, ver. 26. *It is good that a man ſhould both hope, and quietly wait for the ſalvation of God.* But yet there ſeems ſmall encouragement for her ſo to do, if things be with her as was expreſſed: Things indeed (ſaith ſhe) are very ſad with me, *My ſoul hath them ſtill in remembrance, and is bowed down in me*, ver. 20. but yet, ſomewhat *I recall to mind, and therefore have I hope*, ver. 21. *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not conſumed, becauſe his compaſſions fail not*, There is mercy and never failing compaſſion, in God; ſo that though my own preſent condition be full of darkneſs, and I ſee no deliverance; yet I purpoſe ſtill to abide waiting on him: Who knows what thoſe infinite ſtores and treaſures of mercy and relief that are with him, may at length afford unto me? And many inſtances of the like kind may be added.

We may obſerve by the way, how far this relief extends itſelf, and what it enables the ſoul unto. As,

Firſt, The ſoul is enabled thereby to reſign itſelf unto the diſpoſal of ſovereign grace, in ſelf-abhorrency, and a renunciation of all other ways of relief, Lam. iii. 29. *He putteth his mouth in the duſt, if ſo be there may be hope.* What God will, is his language. Here he lies at his diſpoſal, humble, broken, but abiding his pleaſure. *Though he ſlay me* (ſaith Job) *yet I will truſt in him*, chap. xiii. 15. "Is it all one how he deals "with me; whatever be the event, I will abide cleav- "ing unto him. I will not think of any other way of "extricating myſelf from my diſtreſs. I will neither fly "like Jonah, nor hide like Adam, nor take any other "courſe for deliverance. Saith the ſoul, God is a God "that hideth himſelf from me, Iſa. xlv. 15. *I walk* "*in darkneſs and have no light*, chap. l. 10. *My fleſh* "*faileth; and my heart faileth*, Pſal. lxxiii. 26. ſo that "I am overwhelmed with trouble. *Mine iniquities have*

" *taken such hold on me, that I cannot look up,* Psal. xl. 12.
" *The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten*
" *me,* Isa. xlix. 14. Every day am I in dread and terror,
" and am ready utterly to faint, and no relief can I obtain.
" What then shall I do? Shall I curse God and die?
" Or cry, *This evil is of the Lord, why should I wait for*
" *him any longer?* Shall I take the course of the world,
" and seeing it will be no better, be wholly regardless
" of my latter end? No, I know whatever my lot and
" portion be, that there is forgiveness with God. This
" and that poor man trusted in him, they cried unto
" him, and were delivered. So did David in his great
" distress, *he encouraged his heart in the Lord his God,*
" 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. It is good for me to cast myself
" into his arms; it may be he will frown; it may be he
" is wroth still; but all is one, this way I will go; as it
" seems good unto him to deal with me, so let it be:
" And unspeakable are the advantages which a soul
" obtains by this self-resignation, which the faith treat-
" ed of, will infallibly produce."

Secondly, It extends itself unto a resolution of waiting in the condition wherein the soul is. This the church comes unto, Lam. iii. 26. *It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.* I will not give over my expectation, I will not make haste, nor limit God; but I will ly at his foot, until his own appointed time of mercy shall come. Expectation and quietness make up waiting. These the soul attains unto, with this supportment it looks upwards, as a servant that looks to the hands of his master, still fixed on God to see what he will do, to hear what he will speak, concerning him; missing no season, no opportunity, wherein any discovery of the will of God may be made to him. And this he doth in quietness, without repining, or murmuring, turning all his complaints against himself and his own vileness, that hath cut him short from a participation of that fulness of love and grace which is with God: That this effect also attends this faith will fully appear in the close of the psalm.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, It ſupports unto waiting in the uſe of all mean, for the attainment of a ſenſe of forgiveneſs, and ſo hath its effect in the whole courſe of our obedience. *There is forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayeſt be feared.* To fear the Lord, is an expreſſion comprehenſive of his whole worſhip, and all our duty. This I am encouraged, ſaith the pſalmiſt, unto in my depths; becauſe there is forgiveneſs with thee. I will abide in all my duties, in all the ways of thy worſhip, wherein thou mayeſt be found. And however it may be for a while, the latter end of that ſoul, who thus abideth with God, ſhall be peace. Let us then, nextly, ſee by what ways and means it yields this ſupportment.

Firſt, It begets a liking of God in the ſoul, and conſequently ſome love unto him. The ſoul apprehends God as one infinitely to be deſired and delighted in by thoſe who have a ſhare in forgiveneſs. It cannot but conſider him as good and gracious, however its own eſtate be hazardous, Pſal. lxxiii. 1, 2. *Yet God is good to Iſrael, to ſuch as are of a clean heart; as for me, my feet were almoſt gone, my ſteps had well nigh ſlipt.* However the ſtate ſtands with me I know that God is good, good to Iſrael; and therewith ſhall I ſupport myſelf. When once this ground is got upon the ſoul, that it conſiders God in Chriſt as one to be delighted in, and loved, great and bleſſed effects will enſue. 1. Self-abhorrency and condemnation, with reſignation of all to God, and permanency therein, do certainly attend it. 2. Still ſomewhat or other in God will be brought to mind, to relieve it under faintings; ſome new ſprings of hope will be every day opened. 3. And the ſoul will be inſenſibly wrought upon to delight itſelf in dealing with God. Though in its own particular, it meets with frownings, chidings and repulſes, yet this ſtill relieves him, that God is ſo as hath been declared; ſo that he ſays, however it be, yet God is good, and it is good for me to wait upon him. Without this diſcovery the ſoul likes not God, and whatever it doth, with reſpect unto him, it is becauſe it dares do no otherwiſe, being over-awed with

with his terror and greatneſs. And ſuch obedience God may have from devils.

Secondly, It removes ſundry overwhelming difficulties, that ly in the ſoul's way, before it cloſe with this diſcovery of forgiveneſs. As,

1ſt, It takes away all thoſe hindrances that were formerly inſiſted on, from the greatneſs, holineſs and ſeverity of God, the inexorableneſs and ſtrictneſs of the law, and the natural actings of conſcience, riſing up againſt all hopes of forgiveneſs. All theſe are by this faith removed, and taken out of the way. Where this faith is, it diſcovers not only forgiveneſs, as hath been ſhewed, but alſo the true nature of goſpel-forgiveneſs. It reveals it as flowing from the gracious heart of the Father, through the blood of the Son. Now, this propitiation in the blood of the Son, removeth all theſe difficulties, even antecedently unto our ſpecial ſenſe of an intereſt therein. It ſhews, how all the properties of God may be exalted, and the law fulfilled, and yet forgiveneſs given out to ſinners. And herein lies no ſmall advantage unto a ſoul in its approaches unto God. All thoſe dreadful apprehenſions of God, which were wont to beſet him in the firſt thoughts of coming to him, are now taken out of the way; ſo that he can quietly apply himſelf unto his own particular concernments before him.

2dly, In particular, it removes the overwhelming conſideration of the unſpeakable greatneſs of ſin; this preſſeth the ſoul to death, when once the heart is poſſeſſed with it. Were not their ſins ſo great, ſuch as no heart can imagine, or tongue declare, it might poſſibly be well with them, ſay diſtreſſed ſinners. They are not ſo troubled that they are ſinners, as that they are great ſinners; not that theſe, and thoſe ſins they are guilty of, but that they are great ſins attended with fearful aggravations; otherwiſe they could deal well enough with them. Now, though this diſcovery free men not from the entanglement of their ſins as theirs, yet it doth from the whole entanglements of their ſins, as great and many.

ny. This conſideration may be abſtracted. The ſoul ſees enough in God to forgive great ſins, though it doth not, as yet, to forgive his ſins. That great ſins ſhall be pardoned, this diſcovery puts out of queſtion; whether his ſins ſhall be pardoned, is now all the enquiry. Whatever any faith can do, that this faith will do; unleſs it be the making of particular application of the things believed unto itſelf. The ſoul than can no longer juſtly be troubled about the greatneſs of ſin; the infiniteneſs of forgiveneſs that he ſees in God will relieve him againſt it. All that remains is, that it his own ſin about which he hath to deal, whereof afterwards. Theſe, and like difficulties, are removed by it.

Thirdly, It gives ſome life in, and encouragement unto duty. And that, *1ſt*, Unto duty as duty; eyeing God by faith in ſuch a fulneſs of grace, the ſoul cannot but be encouraged to meet him in every way of duty, and to lay hold upon him thereby. Every way leading to him, as leading to him, muſt be well liked and approved of: And, *2dly*, To all duties; and herein lies no ſmall advantage. God is oftentimes found in duties, but in what, or of what kind, he will be found of any one in particular, is uncertain. This faith puts the ſoul on all; ſo it did the ſpouſe in the parallel to that in hand, Cant iii. 2, 3, 4 Now, what ſupportment may be hence obtained, is eaſily apprehended; ſupportment, not from them, or by them, but in them, as the means of intercourſe between God and the ſoul.

From theſe effects of this diſcovery of forgiveneſs in God, three things will enſue, which are ſufficient to maintain the ſpiritual life of the ſoul.

Firſt, A reſolution to abide with God, and to commit all unto him. This the word, as was obſerved, teaches us; *There is forgiveneſs with thee, and therefore thou ſhalt be feared.* Becauſe this I found, and this I am perſuaded of, therefore will I abide with him in the way of his fear and worſhip. This our Saviour calls unto, John xv. 4. *Abide in me;* except you do ſo, *ye can bear no fruit.* So the Lord repreſenting his taking the church

church unto himself, under the time of the prophet's taking an adulteress in vision, doth it on these terms, Hos. iii. 3. *Thou shalt abide for many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man, so will I also be for thee.* Now, this abiding with God intimates two things; 1*st*, Oppositions, solicitations, and temptations to the contrary. 2*dly*, Forbearing to make any other choice, as unto that end for which we abide with God.

1*st*, It argues oppositions. To abide, to be stable, and permanent, is to be so against oppositions. Many discouragements are ready to rise up in the soul against it. It fears especially, that it shall not hold out, that it shall be rejected at last, that all is nought and hypocritical with it, that it shall not be forgiven, that God indeed regards it not, and therefore it may well enough give over its hopes, which seem often at the giving up of the ghost, will assault it. Again, oppositions arise from corruptions and temptations unto sin, contrary to the life of faith: And these often proceed to a high degree of prevalency, so that the guilt contracted upon them is ready to cast the soul out of all expectation of mercy; I shall one day perish by these means, saith the soul, if I am not already lost.

But now, where faith hath made this discovery of forgiveness, the soul will abide with God against all these discouragements and oppositions; it will not leave him, it will not give over waiting for him. So David expresseth the matter in the instance of himself, Psal. lxxiii. 1, 2. *But as for me, my feet, were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipt;* and v. 13. *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain;* but yet after all his conflicts, this at last he comes unto, ver. 26. *Though my heart and my flesh faileth, yet* (ver. 28.) *It is good for me to draw near unto God:* I will yet abide with God, I will not let go his fear, nor my profession; although I walk weakly, lamely, unevenly, yet I will still follow after him. As it was with the disciples, when many, upon a strong temptation, went back from Christ, and walked no more with

with him, *Jeſus ſaid unto them, will ye go away alſo?* to which Peter replies in the name of the reſt of them, *Lord to whom ſhall we go? thou haſt the words of eternal life*, John vi. 66, 67, 68. It is thus and thus with me, ſaith the ſoul; I am toſſed and afflicted, and not comforted; little life, little ſtrength, real guilt, many ſins, and much diſconſolation. What then ſaith God by his word, *Wilt thou go away alſo?* No, ſaith the ſoul, there is *forgiveneſs with thee, thou haſt the words of eternal life*, and therefore I will abide with thee.

2*dly*, This abiding with God argues a forbearance of any other choice. Whilſt the ſoul is in this condition, having not attained any evidences of its own ſpecial intereſt in forgiveneſs; many lovers will be ſolliciting of it to play the harlot, by taking them into its embraces. Both ſelf-righteouſneſs and ſin will be very importunate in this matter; the former tenders itſelf as exceeding uſeful to give the ſoul ſome help, aſſiſtance and ſupportment in its condition. Samuel doth not come ſaith Saul, and the Philiſtines invade me; I will venture and offer ſacrifice myſelf, contrary to the law. The promiſe doth not come to the ſoul for its particular relief; it hath no evidence as to an eſpecial intereſt in forgiveneſs. Temptation invades the mind; try thyſelf, ſays it, to take relief in ſomewhat of thine own providing: And this is to play the harlot from God. To this purpoſe ſelf-righteouſneſs variouſly diſguiſes itſelf, like the wife of Jeroboam, when ſhe went to the prophet. Sometimes it appears as duty, ſometimes as ſigns and tokens; but its end is to get ſomewhat of faith and truſt of the ſoul to be fixed upon it. But when the ſoul hath indeed a diſcovery of forgiveneſs, it will not give ear to theſe ſolicitations: No, ſaith the ſoul; I ſee ſuch a beauty, ſuch an excellency, ſuch a deſireableneſs and ſuitableneſs unto my wants and condition, in that forgiveneſs that is with God, that I am reſolved to abide in the goſpel deſire and expectation of it all the days of my life; here my choice is fixed, and I will not alter. And this reſolution gives glory to the grace of

God. When the soul, without an evidence of an interest in it, yet prefers it above that which, with many reasonings and pretences, offers itself as a present relief unto it; hereby is God glorified, and Christ exalted, and the spiritual life of the soul secured.

Secondly, This discovery of forgiveness in God, with the effects of it before-mentioned, will produce a resolution of waiting on God for peace and consolation, in his own time and way. *He that believeth will not make haste*, Isa. xxviii. 16. not make haste; to what? not to the enjoyment of the thing believed. Haste argues precipitation and impatience; this the soul that hath this discovery is freed from, resolving to wait the time of God's appointment, for peace and consolation. God speaking of the accomplishment of his promises says, *I the Lord will hasten it*, Isa. lx. 22. Well then, if God will hasten it, may we not hasten to it? nay, saith he, I will hasten it, but *in its time*. All oppositions and impediments considered, it shall be hastened, but in its time, its due time, its appointed time. And this the soul is to wait for, and so it will.

As when Jacob had seen the beauty of Rachel, and loved her, he was contented to wait seven years for the enjoyment of her to be his wife, and thought no time long, no toil too hard that he might obtain her; so the soul, having discovered the beauty and excellency of forgiveness as it is with God, as it is in his gracious heart, in his eternal purpose, in the blood of Christ, in the promise of the gospel, is resolved to wait quietly and patiently for the time wherein God will clear up unto it, its own personal interest therein; even one experimental embracement of it, even at the hour of death, doth well deserve the waiting, and obedience of the whole course of a man's life.

And this the psalmist manifests to have been the effect produced in his heart and spirit; for upon this discovery of the forgiveness in God, he resolveth both to wait upon him himself, and encourageth others so to do.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, This prepares the ſoul for the receiving of that conſolation and deliverance out of its preſſures, by an evidence of a ſpecial intereſt in forgiveneſs, which it waiteth for.

1*ſt,* For this makes men to hearken after it; it makes the ſoul like the merchant who hath great riches, all his wealth in a far country, which he is endeavouring to bring home ſafe unto him. If they come, he is well provided for; if they miſcarry, he is loſt and undone. This makes him hearken after tidings, that they are ſafe there; and, as Solomon ſays, *Good news,* in this caſe, *from a far country, is as cold water to a thirſty ſoul,* Prov. xxv. 25. full of refreſhment. Though he cannot look upon them as his own, yet abſolutely, becauſe he hath them not in poſſeſſion, he is glad they are ſafe there. So is it with the ſoul: theſe riches that it ſo values, are, as to its apprehenſions in a far country. So is the promiſe, *That he ſhall behold the land that is very far off,* Iſa. xxxiii. 17. He is glad to hear news that they are ſafe; to hear forgiveneſs preached, and the promiſes inſiſted on, though he cannot as yet look upon them as his own.

The merchant reſts not here, but he hearkneth with much ſolicitouſneſs after the things that ſhould bring home his riches, eſpecially if they have in them his all. Hence ſuch ſhips are called *ſhips of deſire,* Job ix 26. Such a man greatly deſires the ſpeeding of them to their port. He conſiders the wind and the weather, all the occaſions and inconveniences and danger of the way; and blame him not; his all is at ſtake. The ſoul doth ſo in like manner: it hearkneth after all the ways and means whereby this forgiveneſs may be particularly brought home unto it; is afraid of ſin, and of temptation, glad to find a freſh gale of the Spirit of grace, hoping that it may bring in his return from the land of promiſe. This prepares the heart for a ſpiritual ſenſe of it, when it is revealed.

2*dly,* It ſo prepares the ſoul, by giving it a due valuation of the grace and mercy deſired. The merch-

ant-man in the gospel was not prepared to enjoy the pearl himself, until it was discovered to him to be of great price; then he knew how to purchase it, procure it, and keep it. The soul having by this acting of faith, upon the discovery of forgiveness insisted on, come to find that the pearl hid in the field is indeed precious, is both stirred up to seek after possession of it, and to give it its due. Saith such a soul, "How excellent, how "precious is this forgiveness that is with God! Blessed, "yea ever blessed are they who are made partakers of "it! What a life of joy, rest, peace, and consolation "do they lead! Had I but their evidence of an interest "in it, and the spiritual consolation that ensues thereon, "how would I despise the world, and all the temptati- "ons of Satan, and rejoice in the Lord in every condi- "tion!" And this apprehension of grace, also exceed- ingly prepares and fits the soul, for a receiving of a blessed sense of it, so as that God may have glory thereby.

3dly, It fits the soul by giving a right understanding of it; of its nature, its causes, and effects. At the first, the soul goes no farther, but to look after impunity, or freedom from punishment, any way, *What shall I do to be saved?* is the utmost it aims at; who shall deliver me, how shall I escape? And it would be contented to e- scape any way; by the law, or the gospel; all is one, so it may escape. But upon this discovery of forgive- ness treated of, which is made by faith of adherence unto God, a man plainly sees the nature of it, and that it is so excellent, that it is to be desired for its own sake. Indeed when a soul is brought under trouble for sin, it knows not well what it would have. It hath an uneasi- ness or disquietment that it would be freed from; a dread of some evil condition that it would avoid. But now the soul can tell what it desires, what it aims at, as well as what it would be freed from. It would have an interest in eternal love, have the gracious kindness of the heart of God turned towards itself; a sense of the everlasting purpose of his will shed abroad in his heart;

have

have an especial interest in the precious blood of the Son of God, whereby atonement is made for him, and that all these things be testified unto his conscience in a word of promise mixed with faith. These things he came for, this way alone he would be saved, and no other. It sees such a glory of wisdom, love, and grace in forgiveness, such an exaltation of the love of Christ in all his offices, in all his undertakings, especially in his death, sacrifice, and blood-shedding, whereby he procured or made reconciliation for us, that it exceedingly longs after the participation of them.

All these things, in their several degrees, will this discovery of forgiveness in God, without an evidence of an especial interest therein, produce. And these will assuredly maintain the spiritual life of the soul, and keep it unto such an obedience as shall be accepted of God in Christ. Darkness, sorrow, storms, they in whom it is, may meet withal, but their eternal condition is secured in the covenant of God, their souls are bound up in the bundle of life.

From what hath been spoken, we may make some inferences in our passage concerning the true notion of believing. For,

First, These effects ascribed to this faith of forgiveness in God, and always produced by it, make it evident that the most of them who pretend unto it, who pretend to believe that there is forgiveness with God, do indeed believe no such thing. Although I shall, on set purpose, afterwards evince this, yet I cannot here utterly pass it by. I shall then only demand of them who are so forward in the profession of this faith, that they think it almost impossible that any one should not believe it; what effects it hath produced in them, and whether they have been by it enabled to the performance of the duties before-mentioned? I fear, with many, things on the account of their pretended faith are quite otherwise. They love sin the more for it, and God never the better; supposing that a few barren words will issue the controversy about their sins, they become insensibly

sensibly to have slight thoughts of sin, and of God also. This persuasion is not of him that calls us. Poor souls, your faith is the devil's greatest engine for your ruin; the highest contempt of God and Christ, and forgiveness also, that you can be guilty of; a means to let you down quietly to hell; the Pharisees trusted in Moses, and will condemn you: As none is saved but by faith, so you, if it were not for your faith, as you call it, might possibly be saved. If a man's gold prove counterfeit, his jewel's painted glass, his silver lead or dross, he will not only be found poor when he comes to be tried, and want the benefit of riches, but have withal a fearful aggravation of his poverty, by his disappointment and surprizal. If a man's faith, which should be more precious than gold, be found rotten and corrupt, if his light be darkness, how vile is that faith, how great is that darkness? Such it is evident will the faith of too many be found in this business.

Secondly, The work we are carrying on, is the rising of a sin-intangled soul out of its depths, and this we have spoken unto, is that which must give him his first relief. Commonly when souls are in distress, that which they look after is consolation. What is it that they intend thereby? that they may have assurance that their sins are forgiven them, and so be freed from their present perplexities. What is the issue? Some of them continue complaining all their days, and never come to rest or peace; so far do they fall short of consolation and joy. And some are utterly discouraged from attempting any progress in the ways of God. What is the reason hereof? Is it not, that they would fain be finishing their building, when they have not laid the foundation. They have not yet made thorough work in believing forgiveness with God, and they would immediately be at assurance in themselves. Now, God delights not in such a frame of spirit; For,

1*st*, It is selfish. The great design of faith is to *give glory to God*, Rom. iv. 20. The end of God's giving out forgiveness, is the praise of his *glorious grace*, Eph. i. 6,

But

But let a soul in this frame have peace in itself, it is very little solicitous about giving glory unto God. He cries like Rachel, *Give me children or I die;* give me peace or I perish. That God may be honoured, and the forgiveness he seeks after be rendered glorious, it is cared for in the second place, if at all. This selfish earnestness, at first to be thrusting our hand in the side of Christ, is that which he will pardon in many, but accepts in none.

2*dly*, It is impatient. Men do thus deport themselves, because they will not wait. They do not care for standing afar off, for any season, with the publican. They love not to submit their souls to ly at the foot of God, to give him the glory of his goodness, mercy, wisdom, and love, in the disposal of them, and their concernments. This waiting comprizeth the universal subjection of the soul unto God, with a resolved judgment that it is meet and right that we, and all we desire and aim at, should be at his sovereign disposal. This gives glory to God; a duty which the impatience of these poor souls will not admit them to the performance of; and both these arise,

3*dly*, From weakness. It is weak. It is weakness in any condition that makes men restless and weary. The state of adherence is as safe a condition, as the state of assurance; only it hath more combats and wrestling attending it. It is not then fear of the event, but weakness and weariness of the combat that makes men anxiously solicitous about a deliverance from that state, before they are well entered into it.

Let then the sin-intangled soul remember always this way, method, and order of the gospel, that we have under consideration. First, Exercise faith on forgiveness in God; and when the soul is fixed therein, it will have a ground and foundation whereon it may stand securely, in making application of it unto itself. Drive this principle in the first place unto a stable issue, upon gospel evidences; answer the objections that ly against it, and then you may proceed. In believing, the soul makes

makes a conquest upon Satan's territories. Do then as they do, who are entring on an enemy's country, secure the passages, fortify the strong holds as you go on, that you be not cut off in your progress. Be not as a ship at sea, which passeth on, and is no more possessed or master of the water it hath gone through, than of that whereunto it is not yet arrived. But so it is with a soul, that fixeth not on these foundation-principles; he presseth forwards, and the ground crumbles away under his feet, and so he wilders away all his days in uncertainties. Would men but lay this principle well in their souls, and secure it against assaults, they might proceed, though not with so much speed as some do, yet with more safety. Some pretend at once to fall into full assurance, I wish it prove not a broad presumption in the most. It is to no purpose for him to strive to fly, who cannot yet go; to labour to come to assurance in himself, who never well believed forgiveness in God. Now, that we may be enabled to fix this persuasion against all opposition, that which in the next place I shall do, is to give out such unquestionable evidences of this gospel truth, as the soul may safely build and rest upon: And these contain the confirmation of the principle proposition before laid down.

Evidences of forgiveness in God.----No inbred notions of any free acts of God's will.----Forgiveness not revealed by the works of nature, nor the law.

First, The things that are spoken, or to be known of God are of two sorts; natural and necessary: Such as are his essential properties, or the attributes of his nature, his goodness, holiness, righteousness, omnipotency, eternity, and the like. These are called τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, Rom. i. 19, *That which may be known of God.* And there are two ways as the apostle there declares, whereby that which he there intimates of God may be known.

First,

First, By the inbred light of nature; φανερὸν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς, ver. 19. *It is manifeſt in themſelves,* in their own hearts; they are taught it by the common conceptions and preſumptions which they have of God by the light of nature. From hence do all mankind know concerning God, that he is, that he is eternal, infinitely powerful, good, righteous, holy, omnipotent. There needs no ſpecial revelation of theſe things that men may know them; that indeed they may be known ſavingly, there is, and therefore they that know theſe things by nature, do alſo believe them on revelation, Heb. xi. 6. *He that* COMETH *unto God, muſt* BELIEVE *that he is, and that he is a rewarder.* Though men KNOW God, by the light of nature, yet they cannot COME to God by that knowledge.

Secondly, Theſe eſſential properties of the nature of God are revealed by his works. So the apoſtle in the ſame place, ver. 20. *The inviſible things of God from the creation of the world, are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead:* See alſo, Pſal. xix. 1, 2, 3, And this is the firſt ſort of things that may be known of God.

Again, there are the free acts of his will and power; or his free eternal purpoſes, with the temporal diſpenſations that flow from them. Now of this ſort is the forgiveneſs that we are enquiring after; it is not a property of the nature of God, but an act of his will, and a work of his grace. Although it hath its riſe and ſpring in the infinite goodneſs of his nature, yet it proceeds from him, and is not exerciſed but by an abſolute free and ſovereign act of his will. Now, there is nothing of God, or with him, of this ſort, that can be any ways known, but only by eſpecial revelation: For,

First, There is no inbred notion of the acts of God's will in the heart of man, which is the firſt way whereby we come to the knowledge of any thing of God. Forgiveneſs is not revealed by the right of nature; fleſh and blood, which nature is, declares it not: By that means, *No man hath ſeen God at any time,* John i. 8.

that is, as a God of mercy and pardon as the Son reveals him. Adam had an intimate acquaintance, according to the limited capacity of a creature, with the properties and excellencies of the nature of God. It was implanted in his heart, as indispensibly necessary unto that natural worship, which, by the law of his creation, he was to perform; but when he had sinned, it is evident, that he had not the least apprehension that there was forgiveness with God. Such a thought would have laid a foundation of some farther treaty with God about his condition. But he had no other design but of *flying and hiding himself*, Gen. iii. 10. so declaring that he was utterly ignorant of any such thing as pardoning mercy. Such, and no other, are all the first or purely natural conceptions of sinners, namely, that it is δικαίωμα τοῦ θεοῦ, *the judgment of God*, Rom. i. 32. that sin is to be punished with death. It is true, these conceptions in many are stifled by rumours, reports, traditions, that it may be otherwise; but all these are far enough from that revelation of forgiveness, which we are enquiring after.

Secondly, The consideration of the works of God's creation, will not help a man to this knowledge, that there is forgiveness with God. The apostle tells us, Rom. i. 20. what it is of God that his works reveal, even his eternal power and Godhead, or the essential properties of his nature, but no more; not any of the purposes of his grace; not any of the free acts of his will; not pardon and forgiveness. Besides, God made all things in such an estate and condition, namely, of rectitude, integrity, and uprightness, Eccl. vii. 29. that it was impossible they should have any respect unto sin, which is the corruption of all, or to the pardon of it, which is their restitution, whereof they stand in no need. There being no such thing in the world, as a sin, nor any such thing supposed to be, when all things were made of nothing, how could any thing declare or reveal the forgiveness of it.

Thirdly, No works of God's providence can make this discovery, God hath indeed born testimony to himself and

and his goodneſs in all ages, from the foundation of the world, in the works of his providence: So Acts xiv. 15, 16, 17. *We preach unto you, that you ſhould turn from theſe vanities, unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the ſea, and all things that are therein; who in times paſt ſuffered all nations to walk in their own ways: Nevertheleſs, he left not himſelf without witneſs, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful ſeaſons, filling our heart with food and gladneſs:* οὐκ ἀμάρτυρον ἑαυτὸν ἀφῆκε, *he left not himſelf without witneſs*, that is, by the works of his providence there recounted, he thus far bore teſtimony to himſelf, that he is, and is good, and doth good, and ruleth the world; ſo that they were utterly inexcuſable who, taking no notice of theſe works of his, nor the fruits of his goodneſs, which they lived upon, turned away after τὰ μάταια, vain things, as the apoſtle there calls the idols of the Gentiles. But yet theſe things did not diſcover pardon and forgiveneſs. For God ſtill ſuffered them to go on in their own ways, and winked at their ignorance: So again, Acts xvii. 23. 24, 25, 26, 27. *Whom you ignorantly worſhip, him declare I unto you. God that made the world, and all things therein, ſeeing that he is the Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worſhipped with mens hands, as though he needeth any thing, ſeeing he giveth unto all, life and breath and all things, and hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth* (where, by the way, there is an alluſion to that of Gen. xi. 28. *the Lord ſcattered them abroad on all the face of the earth*) *and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation, that they ſhould ſeek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, tho' he be not far from every one of us.* By arguments taken from the works of God both of creation and providence, the apoſtle proves the being, the properties of God. Yea, he lets them know with whom he had to do, that God deſigned by his works ſo far to reveal himſelf unto them, as the true and living God,

the maker and governor of all things, as that they ought to have enquired more diligently after him, and not to look on him alone as the unknown God, who alone might be known; all their idols being vain and nothing. But of the diſcovery of pardon and forgiveneſs in God, by theſe ways and means he ſpeaks not; yea, he plainly ſhews that this was not done thereby. For the great call to ſaving repentance, is by the revelation of forgiveneſs. But now, by theſe works of his providence. God called not the Gentiles to ſaving repentance No, ſaith he, he *ſuffered them to walk ſtill in their own ways*, chap xiv. 16. *and winked at the times of their ignorance;* but *now*, that is by the word of the goſpel, *commanded them to repent*, chap. xvii. 30.

Secondly, Whereas there had been one ſignal act of God's providence about ſin, when man firſt fell into the ſnares of it; it was ſo far from the revealing forgiveneſs in God, that it rather ſeverely intimated the contrary. This was God's dealing with ſinning angels. The angels were the firſt ſinners; and God dealt firſt with them about ſin. And what was his dealing with them, the Holy Ghoſt tells us, 2 Pet. ii 4. ἀγγέλων ἁμαρτησάντων οὐκ ἐφείσατο, *he ſpared not the ſinning angels.* He ſpared them not, is the ſame word which he uſeth, where he ſpeaks of laying all our iniquities on Chriſt, he undergoing the puniſhment due unto them, Rom viii. 32. οὐκ ἐφείσατο, *he ſpared him not;* that is, he laid on him the full puniſhment, that by the curſe and ſanction of the law, was due unto ſin. So he dealt with the angels that ſinned; he ſpared them not, but inflicted on them the puniſhment due unto ſin, ſhutting them up under chains of darkneſs for the judgment of the great day. Hitherto then God keeps all thoughts of forgiveneſs in his own eternal boſom. There is not ſo much as the leaſt dawning of it upon the world. And this was at firſt no ſmall prejudice againſt any thoughts of forgiveneſs. The world is made, ſin enters by the moſt glorious part of the creation, whoſe recovery by pardon might

might ſeem more deſireable, but not the leaſt appearance of it is diſcovered. Thus it was hid in God from the foundation of the world, Eph. iii. 9.

THIRDLY, God gave unto man a law of obedience immediately upon his creation; yea, for the main of it, God implanted it in him, by, and in, his creation. This law, it was ſuppoſed, man might tranſgreſs. The very nature of a law preſcribed unto free agents, attended with threatnings and promiſes of reward, requires that ſuppoſition. Now, there was not annexed to this law, or revealed with it, the leaſt intimation of pardon to be obtained, if tranſgreſſion ſhould enſue. Gen. ii. 17. we have this law, *In the day thou eateſt, thou ſhalt ſurely die:* Dying thou ſhalt die; or bring upon thyſelf aſſuredly the guilt of death temporal and eternal. There God leaves the ſinner under the power of that commination. Of forgiveneſs, or pardoning mercy, there is not the leaſt intimation. To this very day, that law, which was then the whole rule of life and acceptance with God, knows no ſuch thing. Dying thou ſhalt die, O ſinner, is the preciſe and final voice of it. From theſe previous conſiderations, added to what was formerly ſpoken, ſome things preparatory to the enſuing diſcourſe may be inferred: As,

Firſt, That it is a great and rare thing to have forgiveneſs in God diſcovered unto a ſinful ſoul. A thing it is, that, as hath been ſhewed, conſcience and law, with the inbred notions that are in the heart of man about God's holineſs and vindictive juſtice, do ly againſt. A matter whereof we have no natural preſumption; whereof there is no common notion in the mind of man. A thing which no conſideration of the works of God, either of creation or providence will reveal, and which the great inſtance of God's dealing with ſinning angels, renders deep, admirable and myſterious. Men who have common and ſlight thoughts of God, of themſelves, of ſin, of obedience, of the judgment to come, of eternity, that feed upon the aſhes of rumours, reports,

ports, hearſays, traditions, without looking into the reality of things, may, and do take this to be an ordinary and acknowledged truth, eaſy to be entertained, which, upon the matter, no man disbelieves. But convinced ſinners, who make a trial of theſe things as running into eternity, have other thoughts of them. And as to that which is pretended every one believes, we have great cauſe to cry out, *Lord, who hath believed our report, to whom hath* this *arm of the Lord been revealed?*

Secondly, That the diſcovery of forgiveneſs in God, being a matter of ſo great difficulty, is a thing precious and excellent, as being the foundation of all our communion with God here, and of all undeceiving expectation of our enjoyment of him hereafter. It is a pure goſpel truth, that hath neither ſhadow, footſtep, nor intimation elſewhere, the whole creation hath not the leaſt obſcure impreſſion of it left thereon; ſo that,

Thirdly, It is undoubtedly greatly incumbent on us to enquire diligently, as the prophets did of old, into this ſalvation; to conſider what ſure evidences faith hath of it, ſuch as will not, as cannot fail us. To be ſlight and common in this matter, to take it up at random, is an argument of an unſound rotten heart. He that is not ſerious in his enquiry into the revelation of this matter, is ſerious in nothing wherein God or his ſoul is concerned. The Holy Ghoſt knows what our frame of heart is, and how ſlow we are to receive this bleſſed truth in a gracious ſaving manner. Therefore doth he confirm it unto us with ſuch weighty conſiderations, as Heb. vi. 17, 18. *God willing more abundantly to ſhew unto the heirs of promiſe the immutability of his counſel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impoſſible for God to lie, we might have ſtrong conſolation.* It is of forgiveneſs of ſin that the apoſtle treats, as hath been made evident by this deſcription of it before given. Now, to give evidence hereunto, and to beget a belief of it in us, he firſt engages a property of God's nature in that buſineſs. He with whom we deal, is ἀψευδὴς----as Tit. i. 2. The God that cannot lie, that

cannot

cannot deceive or be deceived. It is impossible it should be so with him. Now, as this extends itself in general to all the words and works of God, so there is peculiarly in this, whereof he treats τὸ ἀμετάθετον τῆς βουλῆς, an especial immutability of his counsel. Men may think, that although there be words spoken about forgiveness, yet it is possible it may be otherwise; no, saith the apostle, it is spoken by God, and it is impossible he should lie. Yea, but upon the manifold provocations of sinners he may change his mind and thoughts therein; no, saith the apostle, there is a peculiar mutability in his counsel concerning the execution of this thing, there can be no change in it. But how doth this appear, that indeed this is the counsel of his will? Why, saith he, he hath declared it by his word, and that given in a way of promise; which, as in its own nature it is suited to raise an expectation in him or them to whom it is made or given, so it requires exact faithfulness in the discharge and performance of it, which God on his part will assuredly answer. But neither is this all; but that no place might be left for any cavilling objection in this matter, ἐμεσίτευσεν ὅρκῳ, he interposeth himself by an oath. Thus we have this truth deduced from the veracity of God's nature, one of his essential excellencies, established in the immutable purpose of his will, brought forth by a word of promise, and confirmed by God's interposing himself against all occasions of exception, (so to put an end unto all strife about it) by an oath, swearing by himself that so it should be. I have mentioned this only to shew what weight the Holy Ghost lays upon the delivery of this great truth, and thence how deeply it concerns us to enquire diligently into it, and after the grounds and evidences which may be tendered of it; which, among others, are these that follow.

Discovery of forgiveness in the first promise.---The evidence of the truth that lies therein.---And by the institution of sacrifices.----Their use and end.---Also by the prescription of repentance unto sinners.

The

The firſt diſcovery of forgiveneſs in God, and which I place as the firſt evidence of it, was made in his firſt dealing with our parents after their ſhameful ſin and fall. Now, to make it appear, that this is an evidence that carries along a great conviction with it, and is ſuch as faith may ſecurely reſt upon, and cloſe withal, the enſuing obſervations are to be conſidered.

Firſt, The firſt ſin in the world, was on many accounts the greateſt ſin that ever was in the world. It was the ſin as it were of human nature, wherein there was a conſpiracy of all individuals, *omnes eramus unus ille homo*, in that one man, or that one ſin, *we all ſinned*, Rom. v. 12. It left not God one ſubject, as to moral obedience, on earth, nor the leaſt ground for any ſuch to be unto eternity. When the angels ſinned, the whole race or kind did not prevaricate. *Thouſands and ten thouſands of them, and ten thouſand times ten thouſands* continued in their obedience, Dan. vii. 10. But here, all and every individual of mankind, (he only excepted which was not then in Adam) were imbarked in the ſame crime and guilt. Beſides, it diſturbed the government of God in and over the whole creation. God made all things in number, weight, and meaſure, in order and beauty; pronouncing himſelf concerning his whole work, that it was exceeding beautiful and good, Gen. i. 31. Much of this beauty lay in the ſubordination of one thing to another, and of all to himſelf, by the mediation and interpoſition of man, through whoſe praiſes and obedience the reſt of the creation, being made ſubject unto him, was to return their tribute of honour and glory unto God. But all this order was deſtroyed by this ſin, and the very creation itſelf made ſubject to vanity, Rom. viii. 20. On which, and the like accounts, it might be eaſily made to appear, that it was the greateſt ſin that ever was n the world.

Secondly, Man, who had ſinned, ſubſcribed in his heart and conſcience unto the righteous ſentence of the law. He knew what he had deſerved, and looked for nothing but the immediate execution of the ſentence

tence of death upon him. Hence he meditates not a defence, expects no pardon, ſtays not for a trial, but flees and hides, and attempts an eſcape, Gen. iii. 10. *I was afraid*, ſaith he, *and hid myſelf;* than which never were there words of greater horror in the world, nor ſhall be until the day of judgment: Poor creature! he was full of the expectation of vengeance, due for a broken covenant

Thirdly, God hath newly declared, in the ſinning angels, what his juſtice required, and how he could deal with ſinning man without the leaſt impeachment of his government, holineſs or goodneſs. See 2 Pet. ii. 4.

4. There was nothing, without God himſelf, that ſhould move him in the leaſt, ſo much as to ſuſpend the execution of his wrath for a moment; he had not done ſo with the angels. All things lay now under wrath, curſe, confuſion, diſorder; nothing was left good, lovely, or deſireable in his eye. As in the firſt creation, that which was firſt brought forth from nothing was (Heb.) *without form and void*, empty of all order and beauty; nothing was in it to induce or move God to bring forth all things in the glory that enſued, but the whole deſign of it proceeded from his own infinite goodneſs and wiſdom. So was it now again: There was an emptineſs and vanity brought by ſin upon the whole creation: Nothing remained that might be a motive unto a merciful reſtoration, but all is again devolved on his ſovereignty. All things being in this ſtate and condition, wherein all doors ſtood open to the glory of God's juſtice, in the puniſhing of ſin, nothing remaining without him to hold his hand in the leaſt; the whole creation, and eſpecially the ſinner himſelf, lying trembling in expectation of a dreadful doom. What now cometh forth from him? the bleſſed word which we have, Gen. iii. 15. *The ſeed of the woman ſhall break the ſerpent's head.* It is full known, that the whole myſtery of forgiveneſs is wrapt up in this one word of promiſe. And the great way of its coming forth from God, by

the blood of the Meſſiah, whoſe heel was to be bruiſed, is alſo intimated. And this was the firſt diſcovery that ever was made of forgiveneſs in God: By a word of pure revelation it was made, and ſo faith muſt take it up and receive it. Now, this revelation of forgiveneſs with God, in this one promiſe, was the bottom of all that worſhip that was yielded unto him by ſinners for many ages. For we ſhewed before, that without this, no ſinner can have the leaſt encouragement to approach unto him; and this will continue to the end of the world, as a notable evidence of the truth in hand, a firm foundation for faith to reſt and build upon. Let a ſinner ſeriouſly conſider the ſtate of things, as they were then in the world laid down before, and then view God coming forth with a word of pardon and forgiveneſs, merely from his own love, and thoſe counſels of peace that were between the Father and the Son; and he cannot but conclude, under his greateſt difficulties, that yet there is forgiveneſs with God that he may be feared. Let now the law and conſcience, let ſin and Satan ſtand forth, and except againſt this evidence; enough may be ſpoken from it, whatever the particular caſe be, about which the ſoul hath a conteſt with them, to put them all to ſilence.

Secondly, God revealed this ſacred truth by his inſtitution of ſacrifices. Sacrifices by blood, do all of them reſpect atonement, expiation, and conſequentially forgiveneſs. It is true, indeed, they could not themſelves take away ſin, nor make them perfect who came unto God by them, Heb. x. 1. but yet they undeniably evince the taking away of ſin, or the forgiveneſs of it, by what they did denote and typify. I ſhall therefore look a little back into their riſe and intendment.

Firſt, The original and firſt ſpring of ſacrifices is not in the ſcripture expreſly mentioned, only the practice of the ſaints is recorded; but it is certain, from infallible ſcripture-evidences, that they were of God's immediate inſtitution and appointment, God never allowed,

that

that the will or wiſdom of man ſhould be the ſpring and rule of his worſhip. That ſolemn word, wherewith he fronts the command that is, the rule of his worſhip, *thou ſhalt not make to thyſelf*, which is the life of the command (that which follows being an explanation and confirmation of the law itſelf) by inſtances cuts off all ſuch pretences, and is as a flaming ſword turning every way to prevent mens arbitrary approaches to God's inſtitutions. God will not part with his glory of being the only law-giver, as to the whole concernment of his worſhip, or any part of it, unto any of the ſons of men.

Secondly, Neither is the time of their inſtitution mentioned. Some of the papiſts diſpute (as there are a generation of philoſophical diſputers amongſt them, by whom their tottering cauſe is ſupported) that there ſhould have been ſacrifices in paradiſe, if man had not ſinned. But as in all their opinions, our firſt enquiry ought to be, what do they get by this or that, their whole religion being pointed unto their carnal intereſt; ſo we may in particular do it, upon this uncouth aſſertion, which is perfectly contradictious to the very nature and end of moſt ſacrifices, namely, that they ſhould be offered where there is no ſin. Why, they hope to eſtabliſh hence a general rule, that there can be no true worſhip of God in any ſtate or condition without ſacrifice: What then, I pray? Why then, it is evident, that the continual ſacrifice of the maſs is neceſſary in the church, and that without it there is no true worſhip of God; and ſo they are quickly come home to their advantage and profit; the maſs being that inexhauſtible ſpring of revenue, which feeds their pride and luſt throughout the world. But there is in the church of Chriſt an altar ſtill, and a ſacrifice ſtill, which they have rejected for the abominable figment of their maſs; namely, Chriſt himſelf, as the apoſtle informs us, Heb. xiii. 10. But as the ſacrifices of beaſts could not have been before the entrance of ſin, ſo it may be evidenced that they were inſtituted from the foundation of the world, that is, preſently after the en-

trance of ſin. Chriſt is called the *Lamb of God*, John i. 29. which he was, in reference unto the ſacrifices of old, as 1 Pet. ii. 18, 19. whence he is repreſented in the church, as a *Lamb ſlain*, Rev. v. 6. or giving out the efficacy of all ſacrifices to his church. Now, he is ſaid to be *a Lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world*, Rev. xiii. 8. which could not be, unleſs ſome ſacrifice prefiguring his being ſlain had been then offered; for it denotes not only the efficacy of his mediation, but the way. Beſides, the apoſtle tells us, that *without ſhedding of blood there was no remiſſion*, Heb. ix. 22. That is, God, to demonſtrate that all pardon and forgiveneſs related to the blood of Chriſt; from the foundation of the world, gave out no word of pardon, but by and with blood. Now I have ſhewed before, that he revealed pardon in the firſt promiſe, and therefore there enſued thereon the ſhedding of blood and ſacrifices; and thereby that teſtament or covenant was dedicated with blood alſo, ver. 18. Some think that the beaſts of whoſe ſkins God made garments for Adam, were offered in ſacrifices. Nor is the conjecture vain: Yea, it ſeems not to want a ſhadow of a goſpel myſtery; that their nakedneſs, which became their ſhame upon their ſin (whence the pollution and ſhame of ſin is frequently ſo termed) ſhould be covered with the ſkins of their ſacrifices. For in the true ſacrifice there is ſomewhat anſwerable thereunto. And the righteouſneſs of him whoſe ſacrifice takes away the guilt of our ſin, is called our cloathing, that hides our pollution and ſhame.

Thirdly, That after the giving of the law, the greateſt, moſt noble, and ſolemn part of the worſhip of God conſiſted in ſacrifices. And this kind of worſhip continued, with the approbation of God, in the world about four thouſand years; that is, from the entrance of ſin until the death of the Meſſiah, the true ſacrifice, which put an end unto all that was typical.

Theſe things being premiſed, we may conſider what was the mind and aim of God in the inſtitution of this worſhip. One inſtance, and that of the moſt ſolemn of the whole kind, will reſolve us in this enquiry, Lev. xvi.

xvi. 5. Two kids of the goats are taken for an offering for ſin. Conſider only (that we do not enlarge on particulars) how one of them was dealt withal, ver. 20, 22, ---32. *He ſhall bring the live goat, and Aaron ſhall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confeſs over him all the iniquities of the children of Iſrael, and all their tranſgreſſions in all their ſins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and ſhall ſend him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderneſs, and the goat ſhall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited.*

Let us ſee to what end is all this ſolemnity, and what is declared thereby. Wherefore ſhould God appoint poor ſinful men to come together, to take a goat or a lamb, and to confeſs over his head all their ſins and tranſgreſſions, and to devote him to deſtruction under that confeſſion? Had men invented this themſelves, it had been a matter of no moment. But it was an inſtitution of God, which he bound his church to the obſervation of, upon the penalty of his higheſt diſpleaſure. Certainly this was a ſolemn declaration, that there is forgiveneſs with him. Would that God who is infinitely good, and ſo will not, who is infinitely true, holy, and faithful, and ſo cannot deceive, call men out whom he loved, to a ſolemn repreſentation of a thing, wherein their chiefeſt, their eternal concernment did ly, and ſuffer them to feed upon aſhes? Let men take heed that they mock not God; for of a truth, God mocketh not man, until he be finally rejected by him. For four thouſand years together then, did God declare by ſacrifices, that there is forgiveneſs with him, and lead his people by them to make a public repreſentation of it in the face of the world. This is a ſecond uncontrolable evidence of the truth aſſerted, which may poſſibly be of uſe to ſouls that come indeed deeply and ſeriouſly to deal with God; for though the practice be ceaſed, yet the inſtruction intended in them continues.

THIRDLY, God's appointment of repentance unto ſinners, doth reveal that there is forgiveneſs in himſelf; I ſay

I ſay the preſcription of repentance is a revelation of forgiveneſs. After the angels had ſinned, God never once called them to repentance. He would not deceive them, but let them know what they were to look for at his hands; he hath no forgiveneſs for them, and therefore would require no repentance of them. It is not, nor ever was, a duty incumbent on them to repent; nor is it ſo unto the damned in hell. God requires it not of them, nor is it their duty. There being no forgiveneſs for them, what ſhould move them to repent? why ſhould it be their duty ſo to do? Their eternal anguiſh about ſin committed, hath nothing of repentance in it. Aſſignation then of repentance is a revelation of forgiveneſs. God would not call upon a ſinful creature to humble itſelf, and bewail its ſin, if there were no way of recovery, or relief; and the only way of recovery from the guilt of ſin, is pardon, ſo Job xxxiii. 27, 28. *He looketh on men, and if any ſay, I have ſinned, and perverted that which is right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his ſoul from going into the pit, and his life ſhall ſee the light.* In the foregoing verſes he declares the various ways that God uſed to bring men unto repentance. He did it by dreams, ver. 15, 16. by afflictions, ver. 19. by the preaching of the word, ver. 23. What then doth God aim at in and by all theſe various ways of teachings? It is to cauſe man to ſay, I have ſinned and perverted that which was right. It is to bring him to repentance: What now, if he obtain his end, and man cometh to that which is aimed at? Why then, there is forgiveneſs for him, as is declared, ver. 28. To improve this evidence, I ſhall confirm, by ſome few obvious conſiderations, theſe two things.

Firſt, That the preſcription of repentance doth indeed evince that there is forgiveneſs with God.

Secondly, That every one in whom there is repentance wrought towards God, may certainly conclude, that there is forgiveneſs with God for him.

Firſt, No repentance is acceptable with God, but what is built, or leans on the faith of forgiveneſs. We have a cloud of witneſſes unto this truth in the ſcripture.

Many

Many there have been, many are recorded, who have been convinced of ſin, perplexed about it, ſorry for it, that have made open confeſſion and acknowledgment of it, that under the preſſing ſenſe of it, have cried out even to God for deliverance, and yet have come ſhort of mercy, pardon, and acceptance with God. The caſes of Cain, Pharaoh, Saul, Ahab, Judas, and others, might be inſiſted on. What was wanting that made all that they did abominable? Conſider one inſtance for all: It is ſaid of Judas, that he repented, Mat. xxvii. 3. μεταμεληθεὶς, *he repented himſelf;* but wherein did this repentance conſiſt? he was convinced of his ſin in general, ἥμαρτον, ſaith he, *I have ſinned*, ver. 4. 2. He was ſenſible of the particular ſin, whereof he ſtood charged in conſcience before God. I have, ſaith he, *betrayed innocent blood:* I am guilty of blood, innocent blood, and that in the vileſt manner, by treachery. So that he comes, 3. To a full and open confeſſion of his ſin. 4. He makes reſtitution of what he was advantaged by his ſin, *he brought again the thirty pieces of ſilver*, ver. 3. all teſtifying an hearty ſorrow that ſpirited the whole. Methinks now Judas his repentance looks like the young man's obedience, who cried out, *All theſe things have I done; is there any thing lacking?* Yea, one thing was wanting to that young man, he had no true faith nor love to God all this while, which vitiated and ſpoiled all the reſt of his performances. One thing alſo is wanting to this repentance of Judas, he had no faith of forgiveneſs in God; that he could not believe; and therefore after all this ſorrow, inſtead of coming to him, he bids him the utmoſt defiance, and goes away, and hangs himſelf.

Indeed faith of forgiveneſs, as hath been ſhewed, hath many degrees. There is of them, that which is indiſpenſibly neceſſary to render repentance acceptable. What it is in particular, I do not diſpute. It is not an aſſurance of the acceptance of our perſons in general. It is not that the particular ſin wherewith, it may be, the ſoul is perplexed, is forgiven. A general, ſo it be

a goſpel

a goſpel-diſcovery that there is forgiveneſs in God, will ſuffice. The church expreſſeth it, Hoſ. xiv. 3. *In thee the fatherleſs findeth mercy,* and Joel ii. 14 *Who knows but he will return and repent.* I have this ground, ſaith the ſoul, God is in himſelf gracious and merciful; the fatherleſs, deſtitute, and helpleſs, that come to him by Chriſt, find mercy in him. None in heaven and earth can evince, but that he may return to me alſo. Now, let a man's convictions be never ſo great, ſharp, wounding, his ſorrow never ſo abundant, overflowing, abiding, his confeſſion never ſo full, free or open, if this one thing be wanting, all is nothing but what tends to death.

Fourthly, To preſcribe repentance as a duty unto ſinners, without a foundation of pardon and forgiveneſs in himſelf, is inconſiſtent with the wiſdom, holineſs, goodneſs, faithfulneſs, and all other glorious excellencies and perfections of the nature of God: For,

1*ſt,* The apoſtle lays this as the great foundation of all conſolation, that God cannot lie or deceive, Heb. vi. 18. And again, he engageth the faithfulneſs and veracity of God to the ſame purpoſe, Tit. i. 2. *God who cannot lie hath promiſed it.* Now, there is a lie, a deceit in things, as well as in words. He that doth a thing, which in its own nature is apt to deceive them that conſider it, with an intention of deceiving them, is no leſs a liar, than he which affirms that to be true, which he knows to be falſe. There is a lie in actions, as well as in words. The whole life of an hypocrite is a lie. So ſaith the prophet of idolaters, *There is a lie in their right hand,* Iſa. xliv. 20.

2*dly,* The propoſal of repentance, is a thing fitted and ſuited, in its own nature, to beget thoughts in the mind of a ſinner, that there is forgiveneſs with God. Repenting is for ſinners only. *I came not,* ſaith our Saviour, *to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance.* It is for them, and them only. It was no duty for Adam in Eden; it is none for the angels in heaven, nor for the damned in hell. What then may be the language of this appointment?

ment? O ſinners, come and deal with God by repentance, doth it not openly ſpeak forgiveneſs in God? and if it were otherwiſe, could men poſſibly be more fruſtrated or deceived? would not the inſtitution of repentance be a lie? ſuch a deluſion may produce from Satan, but not from him who is the fountain of goodneſs, holineſs and truth. His call to repentance, is a full demonſtration of his readineſs to forgive, Acts xvii. 30, 31, 32. It is true, many do thus deceive themſelves: They raiſe themſelves unto an expectation of immunity, not on goſpel grounds; and their diſapointment is a great part of their puniſhment. But God deceives none; whoever comes to him on his propoſal of repentance, ſhall find forgiveneſs. It is ſaid of ſome indeed, that he *will laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh*, Prov. i. 26. He will aggravate their miſery, by giving them to ſee what their pride and folly hath brought them unto. But who are they? only ſuch as refuſe his call to repentance, with the promiſes of the acceptation annexed.

3*dly*, There is then no cauſe, why thoſe who are under a call of repentance, ſhould queſtion whether there be forgiveneſs in God or no. This concerns my ſecond propoſition, Come, ſaith the Lord unto the ſouls of men; leave your ſinful ways, turn unto me, humble yourſelves with broken and contrite hearts: Alas, ſay poor convinced ſinners, we are poor, dark and ignorant creatures; or, we are old in ſin, or greater ſinners, or backſliders, or have fallen often into the ſame ſins; can we expect there ſhould be forgiveneſs for us? Why, you are under God's invitation to repentance; and to disbelieve forgiveneſs, is to call the truth, holineſs and faithfulneſs of God into queſtion. If you will not believe forgiveneſs, pretend what you pleaſe, it is in truth becauſe you hate repentance. You do but deceive your ſouls when you pretend you come not up to repentance, becauſe you cannot believe forgiveneſs; for in the very inſtitution of this duty, God

engageth all his properties to make it good, that he hath pardon and mercy for ſinners.

4*thly*, Much leſs cauſe is there no doubt of forgiveneſs, where ſincere repentance is in any meaſure wrought. No ſoul comes to repentance, but upon God's call. God calls none but whom he hath mercy for upon their coming. And as for thoſe who ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, as they ſhut themſelves out from forgiveneſs, ſo they are not called to repentance.

5*thly*, God expreſly declares in the ſcripture, that the forgiveneſs that is with him, is the foundation of his preſcribing repentance unto man. One inſtance may ſuffice, Iſa. lv. 7 *Let the wicked forſake his way* in the *Heb.* a perverſe wicked one; *and the man of iniquity his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord; and he will have mercy; and to our God, for* (in the Heb.) *he will multiply to pardon.* You ſee to whom he ſpeaks; to men perverſly wicked, and ſuch as make a trade of ſinning. What doth he call them unto? plainly to repentance, to the duty we have inſiſted on. But what is the ground of ſuch an invitation unto ſuch profligate ſinners? Why, the abundant forgiveneſs and pardon that is with him, ſuper-abounding unto what the worſt of them can ſtand in need of; as Rom. v. 20.

And this is another way whereby God hath revealed that there is forgiveneſs with him, and an infallible bottom for faith to build upon in its approaches unto God it is. Nor can the certainty of this evidence be called into queſtion, but on ſuch grounds as are derogatory to the glory and honour of God. And this connection of repentance and forgiveneſs, is that principle from whence God convinces a ſtubborn unbelieving people, that all his ways and dealings with ſinners are juſt and equal, Ezek. xviii. 25. And ſhould there be any failure in it, they could not be ſo. Every ſoul then that is under a call to repentance, whether out of his natural condition, or from any back-ſliding into folly after converſion, hath a ſufficient foundation to reſt on, as to the pardon he enquires after. God is ready to deal with him on terms

of

of mercy; if out of love to ſin, or the power of unbelief, he refuſe to cloſe with him on theſe terms, his condemnation is juſt. And it will be well, that this conſideration be well imprinted on the minds of men. I ſay, notwithſtanding the general preſumptions that men ſeem to have of this matter, yet theſe principles of it ought to be inculcated. For,

1. Such is the atheiſm that lies lurking in the hearts of men by nature, that notwithſtanding their pretences and profeſſions, we have need to be preſſing upon them evidences of the very being and eſſential properties of God. In ſo doing, we have the aſſiſtance of inbred notions in their own minds, which they cannot eject, to help to carry on the work. How much more is this neceſſary in reference unto the free acts of the will of God, which are to be known only by mere revelation. Our word had need be *line upon line*: And yet when we have done, have cauſe enough to cry out, as was ſaid, *Lord who hath believed our report, and to whom hath this arm of the Lord been revealed?*

2. What was ſpoken before of the obſtacles that ly in the way, hindring ſouls from a ſaving conception of this truth, ought to be remembred. Thoſe who have no experience of them between God and their ſoul, ſeem to be ignorant of the true nature of conſcience, law, goſpel, grace, ſin and forgiveneſs.

3. Many who are come to a ſaving perſwaſion of it, yet having not received it upon clear and unqueſtionable grounds, and ſo not knowing how to reſolve the faith of it into its proper principles, are not able to anſwer the objections that ly againſt it in their own conſciences, and do ſo miſerably fluctuate about it all their days. Theſe had need to have theſe principles inculcated on them. Were they pondered aright, ſome might have cauſe to ſay with the Samaritans, who firſt gave credit to the report of the woman, John iv. They had but a report before, but now they find all things to be according unto it, yea to exceed it. A little experience of a man's own unbelief, with the obſervation that may eaſily be made of

the uncertain progreſſes and fluctuations of the Spirits of others, will be a ſufficient conviction of the neceſſity of of the work we are engaged in.

But it will yet be ſaid, that it is needleſs to multiply arguments and evidences in this caſe. The truth inſiſted on being granted as one of the fundamental principles of religion. As it is not then by any called in queſtion, ſo it doth not appear that ſo much time and pains is needful for the confirmation of it: For what is granted and plain needs little confirmation. But ſeveral things may be turned in anſwer hereunto; all which may at once be here pleaded for the multiplication of our arguments in this matter.

That it is generally granted by all, is no argument that it is effectually believed by many. Sundry things are taken for granted in point of opinion, that are not ſo believed as to be improved in practice. We have in part ſhewed before, and ſhall afterwards undeniably evince, that there are very few that believe this truth, with that faith that will intereſt them in it, and give them the benefit of it. And what will it avail any of us, that there is forgiveneſs of ſin with God, if our ſins be not forgiven? no more, than that ſuch or ſuch a king is rich, whilſt we are poor and ſtarving. My aim is not to prove it as an opinion or a mere ſpeculative truth; but ſo to evidence it in the principles of its being and revelation, as that it may be believed, whereon all our bleſſedneſs depends.

2. It needs never the leſs confirmation, becauſe it is a plain fundamental truth: but rather the more, and that becauſe both of the worth and weight of it. *This is a faithful ſaying*, ſaith the apoſtle, *worthy of all acceptation, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners.* So I ſay of this, which, for the ſubſtance of it, is the ſame with that; it is worthy of all acceptation, namely that there is forgiveneſs with God; and therefore ought it to be fully confirmed: Eſpecially, whilſt we make uſe of no other demonſtrations of it, but thoſe only which God hath furniſhed us withal to that purpoſe; and this he would not have done, but that he knew them needful for us. And for the plainneſs of this truth, it is well if it be ſo unto us. This

I know

know, nothing but the Spirit of God can make it ſo Men may pleaſe themſelves, and others ſometimes, with curious notions, and make them ſeem to be things of great ſearch and attainment; which when they are well examined, it may be, they are not true; or if they are, are yet of a very little conſequence or importance. It is theſe fundamental truths that have the myſteries of the wiſdom and grace of God inwrapped in them; which, who ſo can unfold aright, will ſhew himſelf a *workman that needs not be aſhamed.* Theſe ſtill waters are deep; and the farther we dive into them, the greater diſcovery ſhall we make of their depths. And many other ſacred truths there are, whoſe mention is common, but whoſe depths are little ſearched, and whoſe efficacy is little known.

3. We multiply theſe evidences, becauſe they are multitudes that are concerned in them: All that do believe, and all that do not believe are ſo. Thoſe that do believe, that they may be eſtabliſhed; and thoſe that do not believe, that they may be encouraged ſo to do. Among both theſe ſorts, ſome evidences may be more profitable and uſeful, one to one, ſome to another. It may be amongſt all, all will be gathered up, that no fragments be loſt. They are all, I hope, inſtruments provided by the Holy Ghoſt for this end; and by this ordinance do we endeavour to put them into his hand, to be made effectual as he will. One may reach one ſoul, another another, according to his pleaſure. One may be of uſe to eſtabliſhment, another to conſolation, a third of encouragement, according as the neceſſities of poor ſouls do require. However, God who hath provided them knows, them all to be needful.

4. They are ſo alſo upon the account of the various conditions wherein the ſpirits of believers themſelves may be. One may give help to the ſame ſoul at one ſeaſon, another at another; one may ſecure the ſoul againſt a temptation, another ſtir it up to thankfulneſs and obedience.

Theſe

Theſe things have I ſpoken, that you may not think we dwell too long on this conſideration. And I pray God, that your conſolation and eſtabliſhment may abound in the reading of theſe meditations, as I hope they have not been altogether without their fruit in their preparation.

Further evidences of forgiveneſs with God.-----Teſtimonies that God was well pleaſed with ſome that were ſinners.-------The patience of God towards the world, an evidence of forgiveneſs. Experience of the ſaints of God to the ſame purpoſe.

IV. Let us then, in the fourth place, as a fourth evidence of this truth, conſider thoſe, both under the Old Teſtament and the New, concerning whom we have the greateſt aſſurance that God was well pleaſed with them, and that they are now in the enjoyment of him. And this argument unto this purpoſe the apoſtle inſiſts upon, and preſſeth from ſundry inſtances, Heb. xi. How many doth he there reckon up, who of old obtained a good report and had this teſtimony, that they pleaſed God; verſe 25. *All theſe inherited the promiſes through believing;* that is, obtained the forgiveneſs of ſin. For whereas by nature they were children of wrath, and under the curſe as well as others, obtaining an infallible intereſt in the favour of God, and his teſtimony, that they pleaſed him, it could no otherwiſe be. For without this, on a juſt account, every one of them would have continued in the ſtate wherein Adam was, when he heard the voice of God, and was afraid. Wherefore it being evident, that ſome perſons in all generations, have enjoyed the friendſhip, love and favour of God in this world, and at their departure out of it have entred into glory; it makes it evident, that there is forgiveneſs of ſin with him, without which theſe things could not be.

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Let us, after the example of the apoſtle, mention ſome particular inſtances in this matter. Look unto Abraham; he was the friend of God, and walked with God; God made a ſolemn covenant with him, and takes it for his memorial throughout all generations, that he is the God of Abraham: And he is doubtleſs now at reſt with God. Our Saviour calls the place or condition whereinto bleſſed ſouls are gathered, Abraham's boſom. He is at reſt with whom others are at reſt.

The condition was the ſame with Iſaac and Jacob; they alſo are in heaven, being alive unto and with God. Our Saviour proves it from the tenor of the covenant, *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Iſaac, the God of Jacob; God is not the God of the dead, but of the living*, Matth. xxii. 32. They are yet alive, alive unto God, and with him by vertue of the covenant; or after their death, God would not be ſaid, to be their God. Then death had not reached their whole perſons; They were ſtill alive with God in heaven; and their bodies, by vertue of the ſame covenant, were to be recovered out of the duſt.

The ſame is the ſtate with David. He was a man after God's own heart, that did all his will, and fulfilled all his pleaſure. And although he died, and his body ſaw corruption, yet he is not loſt, he is with God in heaven. Hence he ended his days triumphantly, in a full apprehenſion of eternal reſt, beyond what could in this world be attained, and that by vertue of the covenant. For theſe are the laſt words of David, *Altho' my houſe be not ſo with God, yet he hath made with me an everlaſting covenant*, aſcertaining unto him ſure and eternal mercies, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

Peter alſo is in heaven. Chriſt prayed for him that his faith ſhould not fail; and in his death he glorified God, John xxi. 19.

So is Paul; he alſo is in heaven; he knew that when he was diſſolved, he ſhould be with Chriſt. Here then we are encompaſſed about with a cloud of witneſſes. For,

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1ſt, It is moſt certain, that they were all ſinners: They were all ſo by nature; for therein there is no difference between any of the children of men. And perſonally they were ſinners alſo; they confeſſed ſo of themſelves, and ſome of the ſins of all of them ſtand upon record. Yea, ſome of them were great ſinners, or guilty of great and ſignal miſcarriages. Some before their converſion, as Abraham who was an idolater, Joſh. xxiv. 2, 3. and Paul who was a perſecuter and a blaſphemer. Some after their converſion; ſome in ſins of the fleſh againſt their obedience, as David; and ſome in ſins of profeſſion againſt faith, as Peter. Nothing then is more evident, than that no one of them came to reſt with God but by forgiveneſs. Had they never been guilty of any one ſin, but only what is left upon record concerning them in holy writ, yet they could be ſaved no other way. For he that tranſgreſſeth the law in any one point, is guilty of the breach of the whole, James ii. 10.

What ſhall we now ſay? Do we think that God hath forgiveneſs only for this or that individual perſon? No man queſtions but that all theſe were pardoned. Was it by vertue of any ſpecial perſonal privilege, that was peculiar unto them? Whence ſhould any ſuch privilege ariſe, ſeeing by nature they were no better than others, nor would have been ſo perſonally, had not they been delivered from ſin, and prepared for obedience by grace, mercy, and pardon? Wherefore, they all obtained forgiveneſs by vertue of the covenant, from the forgiveneſs which is with God. And this is equally ready for others, who come to God the ſame way that they did; that is, by faith and repentance.

2dly, Many of thoſe concerning whom we have the aſſurance mentioned, were not only ſinners, but great ſinners, as was ſaid, which muſt be alſo inſiſted on, to obviate another objection. For ſome may ſay, that although they were ſinners, yet they were not ſuch ſinners as we are, And although they obtained forgiveneſs, yet this is no argument that we ſhall do ſo alſo, who

who are guilty of other ſins than they were, and thoſe attended with other aggravations than theirs were. To which I ſay, that I delight not in aggravating, no, nor yet in repeating the ſins and faults of the ſaints of God of old. Not only the grace of God, but the ſins of men, have by ſome been turned into laſciviouſneſs; or been made a cloak for their luſts. But yet, for the ends and purpoſes for which they are recorded by the Holy Ghoſt, we may make mention of them; that they may warn us of our duty, that we take heed leſt we alſo fall, that they may yield us a relief under our ſurpriſals, are they written. So then, where the mention of them tends to the advancement of ſovereign grace and mercy, which is the caſe in hand, we may inſiſt on them. I think then, that without mention of particulars, I may ſafely ſay, That there is no ſin, no degree of ſin, no aggravating circumſtance of ſin, no kind of continuance in ſin, (the only ſin excepted) but that there are thoſe in heaven who have been guilty of them.

It may be yet, ſome will ſay, that they have conſidered the ſins and falls of Lot, David, Peter, Paul, and the thief himſelf on the croſs, and yet they find not their own condition exemplified, ſo as to conclude, that they ſhall have the ſame ſucceſs with them.

Anſw. 1. I am not ſhewing, that this or that man ſhall be pardoned, but only demonſtrating, that there is forgiveneſs with God, and that for all ſorts of ſins and ſinners, which theſe inſtances do aſſuredly confirm. And moreover, they manifeſt, that if other men are not pardoned, it is merely becauſe they make not that application for forgiveneſs which they did.

2. Yet by the way, to take off this objection alſo, conſider what the apoſtle ſays in particular concerning the ſeveral ſorts of ſinners that obtained mercy, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. *Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abuſers of themſelves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners ſhall inherit the*

kingdom of God; and such were some of you. But you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified. Hell can scarce, in no more words, yield us a sadder catalogue. Yet *some* of all these sorts were justified and pardoned.

3. Suppose this enumeration of sins doth not reach the condition of the soul, because of some especial aggravation of its sin, not expressed. Let such a one add that of our Saviour's, Matth. xii. 31. *I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.* They are not, they shall not be all actually remitted, and pardoned unto all men; but they are all pardonable, unto those that seek to obtain pardon for them according unto the gospel. There is with God forgiveness for them all. Now, certainly there is no sin, but only that excepted, but it comes within the compass of *all manner of sin and blasphemy*, and so consequently some that have been guilty of it are now in heaven.

We take it for a good token and evidence of a vertuous healing water, when, without fraud or pretence, we see the crutches of cured cripples, and impotent persons hung about it, as a memorial of its efficacy. And it is a great demonstration of the skill and ability of a physician, when many come to a sick person, and tell him, that he had the same distemper with you, it had the same symptoms, the same effects, and by his skill and care we are cured: Oh, saith the sick man, bring him unto me, I will venture my life in his hand. Now, all the saints of heaven stand about a sin-sick soul; for in this matter we are encompassed with a cloud of witnesses, Heb. xii. 1. And what do they bear witness unto? What say they unto a poor guilty sinner? As thou art, so were we; so guilty, so perplexed, so obnoxious to wrath, so fearing destruction from God. And what way did you steer, what course did you take, to obtain the blessed condition wherein now you are? Say they, We went all to God through Christ for forgiveness, and found plenty of grace, mercy, and pardon

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in him for us all. The rich man in the parable thought it would be a great means of converſion, if one ſhould riſe from the dead and preach: But here we ſee, that all the ſaints departed, and now in glory, do jointly preach this fundamental truth, that there is forgiveneſs with God.

Poor ſouls are apt to think, that all thoſe whom they read or hear of to be gone to heaven, went thither becauſe they were ſo good and ſo holy. It is true, many of them were eminently and exemplarily ſo in their generations. All of them were ſo according to their degrees and meaſures; for *without holineſs no man can ſee God.* And it is our duty to labour to be like unto them in holineſs; if ever we intend to be ſo in happineſs and glory. But yet not one of them, nor any one that is now in heaven, Jeſus Chriſt alone excepted, did ever come thither any other way but by forgiveneſs of ſin; and that will alſo bring us thither, tho' we come ſhort of many of them in holineſs and grace.

And this evidence of forgiveneſs I the rather urge, becauſe I find the apoſtle Paul doing of it eminently in his own perſon, 1 Tim. i. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. *I thank Chriſt Jeſus our Lord who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the miniſtry; who was before a blaſphemer, and a perſecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy, becauſe I did it ignorantly in unbelief. This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cauſe I obtained mercy, that in me firſt Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all long-ſuffering, for a pattern to them that ſhould hereafter believe on him to life everlaſting.* A great ſinner, ſaith he, the chiefeſt of ſinners, I was, which he manifeſts by ſome notable inſtances of his ſin. I was, ſaith he, a blaſphemer, the higheſt ſin againſt God; a perſecutor, the higheſt ſin againſt the ſaints; injurious, the higheſt wickedneſs towards mankind: But, ſaith he, *I obtained mercy*, I am pardoned, and that

with a bleſſed effect. *Firſt*, That he ſhould after all this be ſo accounted faithful as to be put into the miniſtry. And then, that the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in him and towards him, was exceeding abundant. And what was the reaſon, what was the cauſe, that he was thus dealt withal? Why, it was that he might be a pattern, an evidence, an argument, that there was grace, mercy, forgiveneſs, to be had for all ſorts of ſinners that would believe to life everlaſting.

To conclude then this evidence. Every one who is now in heaven, hath his pardon ſealed in the blood of Chriſt. All theſe pardons are as it were hanged up in the goſpel; they are all inrolled in the promiſes thereof, for the encouragement of them that ſtand in need of forgiveneſs, to come and ſue out theirs alſo. Fear not then the guilt of ſin, but the love of it, and the power of it. If we love and like ſin better than forgiveneſs, we ſhall aſſuredly go without it. If we had but rather be pardoned in God's way, than periſh, our condition is ſecure.

V. The ſame is evident from the patience of God towards the world, and the end of it. For the clearing hereof we may obſerve,

1. That upon the firſt entrance of ſin, and breach of that covenant which God had made with mankind in Adam, he might immediately have executed the threatned curſe, and have brought eternal death upon them that ſinned. Juſtice required that it ſhould be ſo, and there was nothing in the whole creation to interpoſe ſo much as a reprieve, or a reſpite of vengeance. And had God then ſent ſinning man with the apoſtate angels that induced him into ſin, immediately into eternal deſtruction, he would have been glorified in his righteouſneſs and ſeverity, by and among the angels that ſinned not, or he could have created a new race of innocent creatures, to have worſhipped him and glorified him for his righteous judgment; even as the elect at the laſt day, ſhall do for the deſtruction of ungodly men.

2. God

2. God hath not taken this courſe. He hath continued the race of mankind for a long ſeaſon on the earth; he hath watched over them with his providence, and exerciſed exceeding patience, forbearance, and long ſuffering towards them. This the apoſtle Paul at large diſcourſeth on, Acts xiv 15, 16, 17 chap. xvii. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30. as alſo, Rom. ii. 4. And it is open and manifeſt in their event. The whole world is every day filled with tokens of the power and patience of God. Every nation, every city, every family is filled with them.

3. That there is a common abuſe of this patience of God viſible in the world in all generations. So it was of old; God ſaw it to be ſo, and complained of it, Gen. vi. 5, 6. All the evil, ſin, wickedneſs, that hath been in the world, which no heart can conceive, no tongue can expreſs, hath been all an abuſe of this patience of God. This with the moſt is the conſequent of God's patience and forbearance. Men count it a ſeaſon to fulfil all the abominations that their evil hearts can ſuggeſt unto them, or Satan draw them into a combination with himſelf in. This the ſtate of things in the world proclaims, and every ones experience confirms.

4. Let us therefore conſider what is the true and proper end of this patience of God towards the world, enduring it in ſin and wickedneſs, for ſo long a ſeaſon, and ſuffering one generation to be multiplied after another. Shall we think that God hath no other deſign, in all this patience towards mankind in all generations, but merely to ſuffer them all and every one, without exception, to ſin againſt him, diſhonour him, provoke him, that ſo he may at length everlaſtingly deſtroy them all? It is confeſſed, that this is the conſequent, the event of it with the moſt, through their perverſe wickedneſs, with their love of ſin and pleaſure. But is this the deſign of God? his only deſign? hath he no other purpoſe but merely to forbear them a while in their folly, and then to avenge himſelf upon them?

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Is this his intendment, not only thoſe who are obſtinate in their darkneſs, ignorance and rebellion againſt him, whoſe damnation is juſt, and ſleepeth not; but alſo towards thoſe whom he ſtirs up by his grace to ſeek after a remedy and deliverance from the ſtate of ſin and death? God forbid; yea, ſuch an apprehenſion would be contrary to all thoſe notions of the infinite wiſdom and goodneſs of God which are ingrafted upon our hearts by nature, and which all his works manifeſt and declare. Whatever therefore it be, this cannot be the deſign of God, in his patience towards the world. It cannot be, but that he muſt long ſince have cut off the whole race of mankind, if he had no other thoughts and purpoſes towards them.

5. If this patience of God hath any other intention towards any, any other effect upon ſome, upon any; that is to be reckoned the principle end of it, and for the ſake whereof it is evidently extended unto ſome others, conſequentially unto all. For thoſe concerning whom God hath an eſpecial deſign in his patience, being to be brought forth in the world after the ordinary way of mankind, and that in all ages during the continuance of the world, from the beginning unto the end thereof, the patience which is extended unto them, muſt alſo of neceſſity reach unto all, in that variety wherein God is pleaſed to exerciſe it. The whole world therefore is continued under the patience of God, and the fruits of it, for the ſake of ſome that are in it.

6. Let us therefore ſee what is the end of this patience, and what it teacheth us. Now it can have no end poſſible, but only that before rejected, unleſs there be forgiveneſs of ſins with God. Unleſs God be ready and willing to forgive the ſins of them that come to him according unto his appointment, his patience is merely ſubſervient unto a deſign of wrath, anger, ſeverity, and a reſolution to deſtroy: Now, this is an abomination once to ſuppoſe, and would reflect unſpeakable diſhonour upon the Holy God. Let a man but deal thus, and it is a token of as evil an habit of mind, and perverſe,

verſe, as any can befall him. Let him bear with theſe that are in his power in their faults, for no other end, or for no other deſign, but that he may take advantage to bring a greater puniſhment and revenge upon them; and what more vile affection, what more wretched corruption of heart and mind, can be manifeſt? and ſhall we think that this is the whole deſign of the patience of God? God forbid.

It may be objected, that this argument is not cogent, becauſe of the inſtance that lies againſt it, in God's dealing with the angels that ſinned. It is evident, that they fell into their tranſgreſſion and apoſtaſy, before mankind did ſo: For they led and ſeduced our firſt parents into ſin; and yet God bears with them, and exerciſeth patience towards them to this very day, and will do ſo unto the conſummation of all things, when they ſhall be caſt into the fire *prepared for the devil and his angels.* And yet it is granted, that there is no forgiveneſs in God for them; ſo that it doth not neceſſarily follow, that there is ſo for man, becauſe of his patience towards them.

I anſwer, That this muſt be more fully ſpoken unto, when we come to remove that great objection againſt this whole truth which was mentioned before, taken from God's dealing with the ſinning angels, whom he ſpared not; at preſent two or three obſervations will remove it out of our way. For.

1. That the caſe is not the ſame with the ſinning angels, and the race of mankind in all generations. There are no other angels in this condition, but only thoſe individuals who firſt ſinned in their own perſons. They are not in the providence and patience of God, multiplyed and increaſed in enſuing times and ſeaſons; but they continue the ſame individual perſons who firſt ſinned, and no more. So that immediate execution of the whole puniſhment due unto their ſin, would not have prevented any increaſe of them: But now with man it is otherwiſe. For God continues his patience towards them, to the production of millions of other perſons, who were not

not actually in the firſt ſin. Had not God ſo continued his forbearance, their being, and conſequently their ſin and miſery, had been prevented; ſo that the caſe is not the ſame with ſinning angels and men.

2. Indeed God exerciſeth no patience toward the angels that ſinned; and that becauſe he had no forgiveneſs for them. So Peter tells us; 2 Epiſtle ii. 6. *God ſpared not the angels, that ſinned, but caſt them down into hell, and delivered them into chains of darkneſs.* Immediately upon their ſin, they were caſt out of the preſence of God, whoſe viſion and enjoyment they were made for, and which they received ſome experience of. And they were caſt into hell, as the place of their ordinary retention, and of their preſent anguiſh under the ſenſe of God's curſe and diſpleaſure. And although they may, ſome of them, be permitted to compaſs the earth and to walk to and fro therein, to ſerve the ends of God's holy wiſe providence, and ſo to be out of their priſon; yet they are ſtill in their chains: For they were delivered unto chains of darkneſs, to be kept unto the laſt judgment. And in theſe things they ly actually under the execution of the curſe of God; ſo that there is indeed no patience exerciſed towards them. If a notorious malefactor, or murderer, be committed unto a dungeon, and kept bound with iron chains to prevent his eſcape, untill the appointed day of his ſolemn judgment and execution, without the leaſt intention to ſpare him, none will ſay, there is patience exerciſed towards him; things being only diſpoſed ſo, as that his puniſhment may be ſecure and ſevere. And ſuch is the caſe, ſuch is the condition of the angels that ſinned, who are not therefore to be eſteemed objects of God's patience.

3. The reaſon why the full and final puniſhment of theſe angels is reſerved and reſpited unto the appointed ſeaſon, is not for their own ſakes, their good, benefit, or advantage at all; but merely, that the end of God's patience towards mankind might be accompliſhed. When this is once brought about, they ſhall not be ſpared a day, an hour, a moment. So that God's diſpenſation

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towards them, is nothing but a mere with-holding the infliction of the utmoſt of their puniſhment until he hath accompliſhed the bleſſed ends of his patience towards mankind.

But you will ſay, Secondly, Is it not ſaid, that God *willing to ſhew his wrath, and to make his power known, endures with much long-ſuffering, the veſſels of wrath fitted for deſtruction*, Rom. ix. 22. So that it ſeems that the end of God's endurance and long-ſuffering, to ſome at leaſt, is only their fitting out unto deſtruction.

Anſw. 1. It is one thing to endure with much long-ſuffering, another thing to exerciſe and declare patience. The former only intimates God's withholding for a ſeaſon of that deſtruction which he might juſtly inflict, which we ſpeak not of; the other denotes an acting in a way of goodneſs and kindneſs for ſome ſpecial end.

2. The next verſe declares the great end of God's patience, and anſwers this objection, That *might make known the riches of his glory on the veſſels of mercy which he had prepared unto glory*, ver. 23. This is the great end of God's patience, which whilſt he is in purſuit of towards the veſſels of mercy, he endureth others with much long-ſuffering, and forbearance. This then is fully evident, that there could be no ſufficient reaſon aſſigned of the patience of God towards ſinners, but that there is forgiveneſs prepared for them that come to him by Chriſt.

And this the ſcripture clearly teſtifies unto, 2 Pet iii. 9. The queſtion is, what is the reaſon why God forbears the execution of his judgment upon wicked and ungodly men. Some would have it, that God is ſlack; that is, regardleſs of the ſins of men; and takes no notice of them. No, ſaith the apoſtle, God hath another deſign in his patience, and long-ſuffering; what is this? It is, to manifeſt that he is willing we ſhould periſh. That is it which we have provided. For our freedom from deſtruction is by repentance, which neceſſarily infers the forgiveneſs of ſin. So Paul tells us, that in the goſpel is declared what is the end of God's

patience and forbearance; it is, ſaith he, *the remiſſion of ſins*, Rom. iii. 35.

Let us therefore alſo mind this evidence in the application of ourſelves to God for pardon. It is certain that God might have taken us from the womb, and have caſt us into utter darkneſs. And in the courſe of our lives we have been guilty of ſuch provocations, as God might juſtly have taken the advantage of, to glorify his juſtice and ſeverity in our ruin. But yet we have lived thus long in the patience and forbearance of God. And to what end hath he thus ſpared us, and let paſs thoſe advantages for our deſtruction, that we have put into his hand? It is not, that he might, by his patience, give us leave and ſpace to get an intereſt in that forgiveneſs which he thus teſtifies to be in himſelf; Let us then be encouraged by it, to uſe it unto the end and purpoſe for which it is exerciſed towards us. You that are yet in doubt of your condition, conſider that the patience of God was extended unto you this day, this very day, that you might uſe it for the obtaining of the remiſſion of your ſins. Loſe not this day, nor one day more, as you love your ſouls; for woful will be their condition, who ſhall periſh for deſpiſing or abuſing the patience of God.

IV. The faith and experience of the ſaints in this world, give in teſtimony unto this truth; and we know that their record in this matter is true. Let us aſk of them, what they believe, what they have found, what they have experience of, as to the forgiveneſs of ſin. This God himſelf directs and leads us unto, by appealing unto our own experience, whence he ſhews us, that we may take relief and ſupportment in our diſtreſſes, Iſa. xl. 28. *Haſt thou not heard; haſt thou not known?* Haſt not thou thyſelf, who now crieſt out, that thou art loſt and undone, becauſe God hath forſaken thee, found and known by experience the contrary from his former dealings with thee? And if our own experiences may confirm us againſt the workings of

of our unbelief, ſo may thoſe of others alſo. And this is that which Eliphaz directs Job unto, chap. vi. 1. *Call now if there be any that will anſwer thee, and to which of the ſaints wilt thou look.* It is not a ſupplication to them for help that is intended, but an enquiry after the experience in the caſe in hand, wherein he wrongfully thought they could not juſtify Job. In the Heb. *to which of the ſaints, on the right hand or left, wilt thou have regard in this matter?* Some would fooliſhly hence ſeek to confirm the invocation of the ſaints departed; when indeed if they were intended, it is rather forbidden and diſcountenanced than directed unto. But the ſaints here, are, Pſal. xvi. 2. *The ſaints that are in the earth*, whoſe experiences Job is directed to enquire into, and after. David makes it a great encouragement unto waiting upon God, as a God hearing prayers, that others had done ſo, and found ſucceſs, Pſal. xxxiv. 6. *This poor man cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard him, and ſaved him out of his troubles.* If he did ſo, and had that bleſſed iſſue, why ſhould we not do ſo alſo? The experiences of one, are often propoſed for the confirmation and eſtabliſhment of others; ſo the ſame David, *Come*, ſaith he, *and hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my ſoul.* He contents not himſelf to mind them of the word, promiſes, and providence of God, which he doth moſt frequently; but he will give them the encouragement and ſupportment alſo of his own experience. So Paul tells us, *That he was comforted of God in all his tribulation, that he might be able to comfort them which are in trouble, by the comfort wherewith he himſelf was comforted of God*, 2 Cor. i. 4. That is, that he might be able to communicate unto them his own experience of God's dealing with him, and the ſatisfaction and aſſurance that he found therein. So alſo he propoſeth the example of God's dealing with him in the pardon of his ſins, as a great motive unto others to believe, 1 Tim. i. 13, 14, 15, 16. And this mutual communication of ſatisfying experiences in the things of

God, or of our ſpiritual ſenſe and evidence of the power, efficacy and reality of goſpel truths, being rightly managed, is of ſingular uſe to all ſorts of believers. So the ſame great apoſtle acquaints us in his own example, Rom. i. 11, 12. *I long to ſee you, that I may impart unto you ſome ſpiritual gift, to the end you may be eſtabliſhed; that is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me:* He longed not only to be inſtructing of them, in the purſuit of the work of the miniſtry committed unto him, but to confer alſo with them about their mutual faith, and what experiences of the peace of God in believing, they had attained.

We have in our caſe called in the teſtimony of the ſaints in heaven, with whom theſe on earth do make up one family, even that one family in heaven and earth which is called after the name of the father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, Eph. iii. 14, 15. And they all agree in their teſtimony, as becomes the family and children of God. But theſe below, we may deal perſonally with; whereas we gather the witneſs of the other, only from what is left upon record concerning them. And for the clearing of this evidence, ſundry things are to be obſerved. As,

1. Men living under the profeſſion of religion, and not experiencing the power, virtue, and efficacy of it in their hearts, are, whatever they profeſs, very near to atheiſm, or at leaſt, expoſed to great temptations thereunto. If they profeſs they know God, but in works deny him, *they are abominable and diſobedient, and to every good work reprobate*, Tit. i. 6. Let ſuch men lay aſide tradition and cuſtom, let them give up themſelves to a free and a rational conſideration of things, and they will quickly find, that all their poſſeſſion is but a miſerable ſelf-deceiving; and that indeed they believe not one word of the religion which they profeſs: For of what their religion affirms to be in themſelves, they find not any thing true or real. And what reaſon have they then to believe, that the things which it

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ſpeaks of, that are without them, are one jot better? If they have no experience of what it affirms to be within them, what confidence can they have of the reality of what it reveals to be without them? John tells us, that *he who ſaith he loves God whom he hath not ſeen, and doth not love his brother whom he hath ſeen is a liar.* Men who do not things of an equal unconcernment unto them, wherein they may be tried, are not to be believed in what they profeſs about greater things, whereof no trial can be had. So he that believes not, who experienceth not the power of that which the religion he profeſſeth affirms to be in him, if he ſays, that he doth believe other things which he can have no experience of, he is a liar. For inſtance, he that profeſſeth the goſpel, avows that the death of Chriſt doth crucify ſin; that faith purifieth the heart; that the Holy Ghoſt quickens and enables the ſoul unto duty; that God is good and gracious unto all that come unto him; that there is precious communion to be obtained with him by Chriſt; that there is great joy in believing. Theſe things are plainly, openly, frequently inſiſted on in the goſpel. Hence the apoſtle preſſeth men unto obedience on the account of them; and, as it were, leaves them at liberty from it, if they were not ſo, Phil. ii. 11. Now, if men have lived long in the profeſſion of theſe things, ſaying that they are ſo, but indeed find nothing of truth, reality, or power in them, have no experience of the effects of them, in their own hearts or ſouls; what ſtable ground have they of believing any thing elſe in the goſpel, whereof they cannot have experience? A man profeſſeth, that the death of Chriſt will mortify ſin, and ſubdue corruption; Why doth he believe it? becauſe it is affirmed in the goſpel: How then doth he find it to be ſo? hath it this effect upon his ſoul, in his own heart? Not at all; he finds no ſuch thing in him. How then can this man believe, that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God, becauſe it is affirmed in the goſpel; ſeeing that he finds no real truth of that which it affirms to be in himſelf? So

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our Saviour argues, John iii. 12. *If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how will ye believe, if I tell you heavenly things?* If you believe not the doctrine of regeneration, which you ought to have experience of, as a thing that is wrought in the hearts of men in the earth; how can you assent unto those heavenly mysteries of the gospel, which at first are to be received by a pure act of faith, without any present sense or experience.

Of all dangers therefore in profession, let professors take heed of this; namely, of a customary, traditional, or doctrinal owning such truths, as ought to have their effects and accomplishment in themselves, whilst they have no experience of the reality and efficacy of them. This is plainly to have a form of godliness, and to deny the power thereof: And of this sort of men do we see many turning atheists, scoffers, and open apostates; they find in themselves, that their profession was a lie, and that in truth they had done of those things which they talked of: And to what end should they continue longer in the avowing of that which is not? Besides, finding these things, which they have professed to be in them, not to be so; they think that what they have believed of the things that are without them, are of no other nature, and so reject them altogether.

You will say then, What shall a man do, who cannot find or obtain an experience in himself of what is affirmed in the word? He cannot find the death of Christ crucifying sin in him, and he cannot find the Holy Ghost sanctifying his nature, or obtaining joy in believing. What shall he then do? shall he not believe or profess those things to be so, because he cannot obtain a blessed experience of them? I answer, Our Saviour hath perfectly given direction in this case, John vii. 17. *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.* Continue in following after the things revealed in the doctrine of the gospel, and you shall have a satisfactory experience that they are true, and that they

they are of God; ceaſe not to act faith on them, and you ſhall find their effects; *for them ſhall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord*, Hoſea vi. 3. Experience will enſue upon permanency in faith and obedience. Yea, the firſt act of ſincere believing will be accompanied with ſuch a taſte, will give the ſoul ſo much experience, as to produce a firm adherence unto the things believed. And this is the way to prove, *what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God* which is revealed unto us, Rom. xii. 2.

Where there is an inward ſpiritual experience of the power, reality, and efficacy of any ſupernatural truth, it gives great ſatisfaction, ſtability, and aſſurance unto the ſoul. It puts the ſoul out of danger, or ſuſpicion of being deceived; and gives it to have the teſtimony of God in itſelf. So the apoſtle tells us, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witneſs in himſelf*, 1 John v. 9. He had diſcourſed of the manifold teſtimony that is given in heaven by all the holy Perſons of the Trinity, and on earth by grace and ordinances, unto the forgiveneſs of ſin, and eternal life to be obtained by Jeſus Chriſt. And this record is true, firm, and ſtable, an abiding foundation for ſouls to reſt upon, that will never deceive them. But yet all this while it is without us; it is that which we have no experience of in ourſelves: Only we reſt upon it, becauſe of the authority and faithfulneſs of them that gave it. But now, he that actually believeth, he hath the teſtimony in himſelf; he hath by experience a real evidence and aſſurance of the things teſtified unto, namely, *that God hath given us eternal life, and that this life is in the Son*, verſe 11. Let us then a little conſider, wherein this evidence conſiſteth, and from whence this aſſurance ariſeth. To this end ſome few things muſt be conſidered: As,

1ſt, That there is a great anſwerableneſs, and correſpondency between the heart of a believer, and the truth that he doth believe. As the word is in the goſpel, ſo is grace in the heart; yea, they are the ſame thing

thing variouſly expreſſed, Rom. vi. 17. *You have obeyed from the heart,* εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τύπον διδαχῆς, *the form of doctrine delivered unto you.* As our tranſlation doth not, ſo I know not how in ſo few words to expreſs that which is emphatically here inſinuated by the Holy Ghoſt. The meaning is, that the doctrine of the goſpel begets the form, figure, image, or likeneſs of itſelf in the hearts of men that believe: So they are caſt into the mould of it. As is the one, ſo is the other. The principle of grace in the heart, and that in the word, are as children of the ſame parent, compleatly reſembling and repreſenting one another. Grace is a living word, and the word is figured, limned grace: As is regeneration, ſo is a regenerate heart; as is the doctrine of faith, ſo is a believer: And this gives great evidence unto, and aſſurance of the things that are believed. As we have heard, ſo we have ſeen and found it; ſuch a ſoul can produce the duplicate of the word, and ſo adjuſt all things thereby.

2*dly*, That the firſt original expreſſion of divine truth is not in the word, not as given out from the infinite abyſſe of divine wiſdom and veracity, but it is laid up, and expreſſed in the Perſon of Chriſt. He is the ἀρχέτυπος, the firſt pattern of truth, which from him is expreſſed in the word, and from, and by the word, impreſſed on the hearts of believers; ſo that, as it hath pleaſed God that all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge ſhould be in him, dwell in him, have their principal reſidence in him, Coloſ. ii. 3. So the whole word is but a revelation of the truth in Chriſt, or an expreſſion of his image and likeneſs to the ſons of men. Thus we are ſaid to *learn the truth as it is in Jeſus*, Eph. iv. 21. It is in Jeſus originally, and really, and from him it is communicated unto us by the word. We are thereby taught, and do learn it; for thereby, as the apoſtle proceeds, *we are renewed in the ſpirit of our mind, and do put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs, and true holineſs*, ver. 23, 24. Firſt, the truth is in Jeſus; then it is expreſſed in the word:

word: This word, learned and believed, becomes grace in the heart, every way anſwering unto the Lord Chriſt his image, from whom this transforming truth did thus proceed. Nay, this is carried by the apoſtle yet higher, namely unto God the Father himſelf, whoſe, image Chriſt is, and believers his, thro the word, 2 Cor. iii. 18. *We all with open face, beholding as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord;* whereunto add, chap. iv. 6. *God who commanded light to ſhine out of darkneſs, hath ſhined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt.* The firſt pattern or example of all truth and holineſs is God himſelf; hereof Chriſt is the image, ver. 4. Chriſt is the image of God, *The brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon*, Heb. i. 3. *The image of the inviſible God*, Col. i. 15. Hence we are ſaid to ſee the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt; becauſe he being his image, the love, grace, and truth of the Father are repreſented and made conſpicuous in him. For we are ſaid to behold it in his face, becauſe of the open and illuſtrious manifeſtation of the glory of God in him. And how do we behold this glory? In a glaſs (*as in a glaſs*) that is, in the goſpel, which hath the image and likeneſs of Chriſt, who is the image of God, reflected upon it, and communicated unto it. So have we traced truth and grace from the perſon of the Father, unto the Son as a Mediator, and then transfuſed into the word. In the Father it is eſſentially; in Jeſus Chriſt originally and examplarily, and in the word, as in a tranſcript or copy. But doth it abide there? No, God by the word of the goſpel *ſhines into our hearts*, chap. iv. 6. He irradiates our minds with a ſaving light into it, and apprehenſion of it. And what thence enſues? The ſoul of a believer is changed into the ſame image, by the effectual working of the Holy Ghoſt, chap. iii. 18. that is, the likeneſs of Chriſt implanted on the word, is impreſſed on the ſoul itſelf, whereby it is renewed into the image of God whereunto it was at firſt created. This brings all into a perfect

harmony. There is not, where gospel truth is effectually received, and experienced in the soul, only a consonancy merely between the soul and the word, but between the soul and Christ by the word, and the soul and God by Christ. And this gives assured establishment unto the soul in the things that it doth believe. Divine truth so conveyed unto us, is firm, stable and immoveable: And we can say of it in a spiritual sense, *that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life*, we know to be true. Yea a believer is a testimony to the certainty of truth in what he is, much beyond what he is in all that he saith. Words may be pretended; real effects have their testimony inseparably annexed unto them.

3*dly*, Hence it appears that there must needs be great assurance of those truths which are thus received, and believed. For hereby are *the senses exercised to discern good and evil*, Heb. xv. 14. Where there is a spiritual sense of truth, of the good and evil that is in doctrines, from an inward experience of what is so good, and from thence an aversation unto the contrary; and this obtained διὰ τὴν ἕξιν, by reason of an habit, or an habitual frame of heart, there is strength, there is stedfastness, and assurance. This is the teaching of the unction, which will not, which cannot deceive. Hence many of old and of late, that could not dispute, could yet die for the truth. He that came to another, and went about to prove by sophistical reasonings that there was no such thing as motion, had only this return from him, who either was not able to answer his cavilling, or unwilling to put himself to trouble about it; he arose, and walking up and down, gave him a real confutation of his sophistry. It is so in this case; when a soul hath a real experience of the grace of God, of the pardon of sins, of the vertue and efficacy of the death of Christ, of justification by his blood, and peace with God by believing; let men, or devils, or angels from heaven, oppose these things, if it cannot answer their

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ſophiſms, yet he can riſe up and walk; he can, with all holy confidence and aſſurance, oppoſe his own ſatisfying experience unto all their arguings and ſuggeſtions. A man will not be diſputed out of what he ſees and feels: And a believer will abide as firmly by his ſpiritual ſenſe, as any man can by his natural.

This is the meaning of that prayer of the apoſtle, Col. ii. 2. *That your hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, unto all riches of the full aſſurance of underſtanding, to the acknowledgment of the myſtery of God, and of the Father, and of Chriſt.* Underſtanding in the myſteries of the goſpel they had; but he prays, that by a farther experience of it, they might come to the *aſſurance of underſtanding*. To be true, is the property of the doctrine itſelf, to be certain or aſſured, is the property of our minds. Now, this experience doth ſo unite the mind and truth, that we ſay, ſuch a truth is moſt certain, whereas certainty is indeed the property of our minds, or their knowledge, and not of the truth known. It is certain unto us, that is, we have an aſſured knowledge of it, by the experience we have of it. This is the *aſſurance of underſtanding* here mentioned. And he farther prays, that we may come to the riches of this aſſurance: that is to an abundant plentiful aſſurance. And that εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν, *to the acknowledgement of the myſtery of God*, owning it from a ſenſe and experience of its excellency and worth.

And this is in the nature of all goſpel truth; they are fitted and ſuited to be experienced by a believing ſoul. There is nothing in them ſo ſublime and high, nothing ſo myſterious, nothing ſo ſeemingly low and outwardly contemptible, but that a gracious ſoul hath experience of an excellency, reality, power and efficacy in it all. For inſtance; look on that which concerns the order and worſhip of the goſpel: This ſeems to many to be a mere external thing, whereof a ſoul can have no inward ſenſe or reliſh. Notions there are many about it, and endleſs contentions; but what more? Why, let a gracious ſoul in ſimplicity and ſincerity of

ſpirit, give up himſelf to walk with Chriſt according to his appointment, and he ſhall quickly find ſuch a taſte and reliſh in the followſhip of the goſpel, in the communion of ſaints, and of Chriſt among them, as that he ſhall come up to ſuch riches of aſſurance in the underſtanding and acknowledgments of the ways of the Lord, as others by their diſputing can never attain unto. What is ſo high, glorious, and myſterious as the doctrine of the ever bleſſed trinity? Some wiſe men have thought meet to keep it vailed from ordinary Chriſtians; and ſome have delivered it in ſuch terms, as that they can underſtand nothing by them. But take a believer, who hath taſted how gracious the Lord is, in the eternal love of the Father, the great undertaking of the Son in the work of mediation and redemption, with the almighty work of the Spirit, creating grace and comfort in the ſoul, and hath had an experience of the love, holineſs, and power of God in them all, and he will, with more firm confidence, adhere to this myſterious truth, being led unto it and confirmed in it, by ſome few plain teſtimonies of the word, than a thouſand diſputers ſhall do, who only have the notion of it in their minds. Let a real trial come, and this will appear: Few will be found to ſacrifice their lives on mere ſpeculations. Experience will give aſſurance and ſtability.

We have thus cleared the credit of the teſtimony, now to be improved. It is evident on theſe grounds, that there is a great certainty in thoſe truths, whereof believers have experience. Where they communicate their power unto the heart, they gave an unqueſtionable aſſurance of their truths. And when that is once realized in the ſoul, all diſputes about it are put to ſilence.

Theſe things being ſo, let us inquire into the faith and experience of the ſaints on the earth, as to what they know of the truth propoſed unto confirmation; namely, that there is forgiveneſs with God. Let us go to ſome poor ſoul that now walks comfortably under the

the light of God's countenance, and ſay unto him, Did we not know you ſome while ſince to be full of ſadneſs, and great anxiety of ſpirit; yea, ſorrowful almoſt to death, and bitter in ſoul?

Anſw. Yes, ſaith he, ſo it was indeed; my days were conſumed with mourning, and my life with ſorrow; and I walked heavily in fear and bitterneſs of ſpirit all the day long.

Why, what ailed you, what was the matter with you; ſeeing as to the outward things you were in peace?

Anſw. The law of God had laid hold upon me, and ſlain me; I found myſelf thereby a woful ſinner, yea, overwhelmed with the guilt of ſin. Every moment I expected tribulation and wrath from the hand of God; *My ſore ran in the night and ceaſed not, and my ſoul refuſed comfort.*

How is it then that thou art thus delivered, that you are no more ſad? Where have you found eaſe and peace? have you been by any means delivered, or did your trouble wear off, and depart of its own accord?

Anſw. Alas, no; had I not met with an effectual remedy, I had ſunk, and everlaſtingly periſhed.

What courſe did you take?

Anſw. I went unto him by Jeſus Chriſt againſt whom I have ſinned, and have found him better unto me, than I could expect, or ever ſhould have believed, had not he over-powered my heart by his Spirit. Inſtead of wrath which I feared, and that juſtly, becauſe I had deſerved it, he ſaid unto me in Chriſt, *Fury is not in me.* For a long time I could not believe it; I thought it impoſſible that there ſhould be mercy and pardon for me, or ſuch a one as I. But he ſtill ſupported me, ſometimes by one means, ſometimes by another; until taking my ſoul near to himſelf, he cauſed me to ſee the folly of my unbelieving heart, and the vileneſs of the hard thoughts I had of him, and that indeed there is with him forgiveneſs and plenteous redemption.

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This hath taken away all my ſorrows, and given me quietneſs, with reſt and aſſurance.

But are you ſure now that this is ſo, may you not poſſibly be deceived?

Anſw. Says the ſoul; I have not the leaſt ſuſpicion of any ſuch matter; and if at any time ought doth ariſe to that purpoſe, it is quickly overcome.

But how are you confirmed in this perſuaſion?

Anſw. That ſenſe of it which I have in my heart, that ſweetneſs and reſt which I have experience of, that influence it hath upon my ſoul, that obligation I find laid upon me by it unto all thankful obedience; that relief, ſupportment and conſolation that it hath afforded me in trials and troubles, in the mouth of the grave, and entrances of eternity, all anſwering what is declared concerning theſe things in the word, will not ſuffer me to be deceived. I could not indeed receive it until God was pleaſed to ſpeak it unto me. But now let Satan do his utmoſt, I ſhall never ceaſe to bear this teſtimony, that there is mercy and forgiveneſs with him.

How many thouſands may we find of theſe in the world, who have had ſuch a ſeal of this truth in their hearts, as they cannot only ſecurely lay down their lives in the confirmation of it, if called thereunto, but alſo do chearfully and triumphantly venture their eternal concernments upon it. Yea, this is the riſe of all that peace, ſerenity of mind, and ſtrong conſolation which in this world they are made partakers of.

Now this is to me, on the principles before laid down, an evidence great and important. God hath not manifeſted this truth unto the ſaints, thus copied it out of his word, and exemplified it in their ſouls, to leave them under any poſſibility of being deceived.

Inſtitution of religious worſhip an evidence of forgiveneſs.

VII. God's

VII. God's inſtitution of religious worſhip, and honour therein to be rendered unto him by ſinners, is another evidence, that there is forgiveneſs with him. I have inſtanced before in one particular of worſhip to this purpoſe; namely, in that of ſacrifices. But therein we intended only their particular nature and ſignification, how they declared and manifeſted reconciliation, atonement, and pardon. That now aimed at, is to ſhew, how all the worſhip that God hath appointed unto us, and all the honour which we give unto his holy Majeſty thereby, is built upon the ſame foundation, namely, a ſuppoſition of forgiveneſs; and is appointed to teach it, and to aſcertain us of it, which ſhall briefly be declared. To this end obſerve,

Firſt, That the general end of all divine and religious worſhip, is to raiſe unto God a revenue of glory out of the creation. Such is God's infinite, natural ſelf-ſufficiency, that he ſtands in need of no ſuch glory and honour. He was in himſelf no leſs infinitely and eternally glorious, before the creation of all or any thing whatever, than he will be, when he ſhall be encompaſſed about with the praiſes of all the works of his hands. And ſuch is his abſolute perfection, that no honour given unto him, no admiration of him, no aſcription of glory and praiſe, can add any thing unto him. Hence ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *My goodneſs extends not unto thee,* Pſal. xvi. 2. It doth not ſo reach thee, as to add unto thee, to profit thee, as it may do the ſaints that are on earth. As he in Job, chap. xxii. 2, 3: *Can a man be profitable unto God, as a man that is wiſe may be profitable unto himſelf? Is it any pleaſure to the Almighty that thou art righteous, or is it gain unto him that thou makeſt thy ways perfect?* There is no doubt, but that it is well-pleaſing unto God, that we ſhould be righteous and upright: But we do him not a pleaſure therein, as though he ſtood in need of it, or it were advantage or gain unto him. And again, chap. xxxv. 7. *If thou be righteous what giveſt thou him, or what receiveth he at thine hand?* And the reaſon of all this the apoſtle gives us, Rom. xi. 36.

36. *Of him, and through him, and to him are all things.* Being the firſt ſovereign cauſe, and laſt abſolute end of all things, every way perfect and ſelf ſufficient, nothing can be added unto him. Or, as the ſame apoſtle ſpeaks, *God that made the world, and all things therein, ſeeing that he is the Lord of heaven and earth, is not worſhipped with mens hands, as tho' he needed any thing, ſeeing he giveth unto all life and breath, and all things,* Acts xvii. 24, 25. As he himſelf pleads at large, Pſal. l. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

Secondly, Wherefore all the revenue of glory that God will receive by his worſhip, depends merely on his own voluntary choice and appointment. All worſhip, I ſay, depends now on the ſovereign will and pleaſure of God. It is true, there is a natural worſhip due from rational creatures by the law of their creation. This was indiſpenſibly and abſolutely neceſſary at firſt. The very being of God, and order of things required that it ſhould be ſo Suppoſing that God had made ſuch creatures as we are, it could not be, but that moral obedience was due unto him; namely, that he ſhould be believed in, truſted and obeyed as the firſt cauſe, laſt end, and ſovereign Lord of all: But the entrance of ſin, laying the ſinner abſolutely under the curſe of God, utterly put an end to this order of things. Man was now to have periſhed immediately, and an end to be put unto the law of this obedience. But here, in the ſovereign will of God, an interpoſition was made between ſin and the ſentence; and man was reſpired from deſtruction. All worſhip following hereon, even that which was before natural by the law of creation, is now reſolved into an arbitrary act of God's will.

And unto this end is all worſhip deſigned, namely to give glory unto God. For, as God hath ſaid, that he will be ſanctified in all that draw nigh unto him, that is in his worſhip, and that therein he will be glorified, Lev. x. 3: and that he that offereth him praiſe, that is, performeth any part of his worſhip and ſervice, glorifieth him, Pſal. l. 23. So the nature of the thing itſelf declareth,

declareth, that it can have no other end. By this he hath all his glory, even from the inanimate creation.

Thirdly, Conſider, that God hath not preſcribed any worſhip of himſelf unto the angels that ſinned. They are indeed under this power, and he uſeth them as he pleaſeth, to ſerve the ends of his holy providence. Bounds he preſcribes unto them by his power, and keeps them in dread of the full execution of his wrath; but he requires not of them that they ſhould believe in him. They believe indeed, and tremble. They have a natural apprehenſion of the being, power, providence, holineſs, and righteouſneſs of God, which is inſeparable from their natures; and they have an expectation from thence of that puniſhment and vengeance which is due unto them, which is inſeparable from them as ſinners. And this is their faith: But to believe in God, that is, to put their truſt in him, to reſign up themſelves unto him, God requires it not of them. The ſame is the caſe with them alſo, as to love, and fear, and delight, all inward affections, which are the proper worſhip of God: Theſe they have not, nor doth God any longer require them in them. They eternally caſt them off in their firſt ſin. And where theſe are not, where they are not required, where they cannot be, there no outward worſhip can be preſcribed or appointed. For external inſtituted worſhip is nothing but the way that God aſſigns, and chuſes to expreſs and exerciſe the inward affections of our minds towards him. He rules the fallen angels *per nutum providentiæ*, not *verbum præcepti*. Now, as God dealt with the angels, ſo alſo would he have dealt with mankind, had he left them all under the curſe, without remedy or hope of relief. As he doth with them, he eternally ſatisfies himſelf in that revenue of glory which ariſeth unto him in their puniſhment; ſo alſo, he would have done with theſe, had there been no forgiveneſs with him for them. He would not have required them to fear, love, or obey him, or have appointed unto them any way of worſhip, whereby to

expreſs ſuch affections towards him. For to what end ſhould he have done it? What righteouſneſs would admit, that ſervice, duty, and obedience ſhould be preſcribed unto them, who could not, ought not to have any expectation or hope of acceptance or reward? This is contrary to the very firſt notion God requires in us of his nature. *For he that cometh unto God, muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of all them that diligently ſeek him.* Heb. xi. 6. which would not be ſo, ſhould he appoint a voluntary worſhip, and not propoſe a reward to the worſhippers. Wherefore,

Fourthly, It is evident, that God by the preſcription of a worſhip unto ſinners, doth fully declare that there is forgiveneſs with him for them. For,

1ſt, He manifeſts thereby, that he is willing to receive a new revenue of glory for them. This, as we have proved, is the end of worſhip. This he would never have done, but with a deſign of accepting and rewarding his creatures. For do we think that he will be beholding unto them? That he will take and admit of their voluntary reaſonable ſervice according to his will and command, without giving them a reward; yea, and ſuch an one as their obedience holds no proportion unto? No ſuch thing would become his infinite ſelf-ſufficiency, goodneſs, and bounty. This the wife of Manoah well pleads, Judges xiii. 23. *If*, (ſaith ſhe) *the Lord were pleaſed to kill us, he would not have received a meat-offering, and a burnt-offering, at our hands.* His acceptance of worſhip from us, is an infallible demonſtration, that he will not execute againſt us the ſeverity of the firſt curſe. And this is clearly evidenced in the firſt record of ſolemn inſtituted worſhip performed by ſinners, Gen. iv. 4. *God had reſpect unto Abel and his offering.* Some think that God gave a viſible pledge of his acceptance of Abel and his offering; it may be, it was by fire from heaven. For how elſe ſhould Cain ſo inſtantly know, that his brother and his offering were accepted, but that he and his were refuſed? However it were, it is evident that what teſtimony God gave of the

the acceptance of his offering, the ſame he gave concerning his perſon; and that in the firſt place he had reſpect unto Abel, and then to his offering. And therefore the apoſtle ſaith, that thereby he obtained *witneſs that he was righteous*, Heb. xi. 4. that is, the witneſs or teſtimony of God himſelf. Now this was in the forgiveneſs of his ſin; without which he could neither be righteous nor accepted, for he was a ſinner. This God declared by acceptance of his worſhip. And thus we alſo, if we have any teſtimony of God's acceptance of us in any part of his worſhip, ſhould employ it to the ſame end. Hath God enlarged our hearts in prayer? Hath he given us an anſwer unto any of our ſupplications? Hath he refreſhed our hearts in the preaching and diſpenſation of the word, or any other ordinance? We are not to reſt in the particular, about which our communion with him hath been. Our doing ſo is the cauſe why we loſe our experiences. They ly ſcattered up and down, ſeparated from their proper root, and ſo are eaſily loſt. But this is that which we ſhould firſt improve ſuch particular experiences in the worſhip of God unto; namely, that God hath pardoned our ſins, and accepted our perſons thereon; for without that, none of our worſhip or ſervice would pleaſe him, or be accepted with him.

2*dly*, Hereby God lets us know, that he deals with us upon new terms, ſo that notwithſtanding ſin, we may enjoy his love and favour. For this we have the engagement of his truth and veracity, and he cannot deceive us: but yet by this command of his, for his worſhip, we ſhould be deceived if there were not forgiveneſs with him. For it gives us encouragement to expect, and aſſurance of finding, acceptance with him, which without it cannot be obtained. This then God declares by his inſtitution of and command for his worſhip, namely that there is nothing that ſhall indiſpenſibly hinder thoſe who give up themſelves unto the obedience of God's commands, from enjoying his love, and favour, and communion with him.

3*dly*, For matter of fact; it is known and confessed, that God hath appointed a worship for sinners to perform. All the institutions of the Old and New Testament bear witness hereunto. God was the Author of them. And men know not what they do, when either they neglect them, or would be intermixing their own imaginations with them. What can the mind of man conceive or invent that may have any influence into this matter, to secure the souls of believers of their acceptance with God? Is there any need of their testimony to the truth, faithfulness, and goodness of God? These things he hath taken upon himself. This then is that which is to be fixed on our souls, upon our first invitation unto religious worship; namely, that God intends a new revenue of glory from us, and therefore declares, that there is a way for the taking away of our sins, without which we can give no glory to him by our obedience, and this is done only by forgiveness.

Fifthly, There are some ordinances of worship appointed for this very end and purpose, to confirm unto us the forgiveness of sin; especially in that worship which is instituted by the Lord Jesus under the New Testament. I shall instance in one or two:

1. The ordinance of baptism. This was accompanied with the dawning of the gospel, in the ministry of John Baptist. And he expressly declared in his sermons upon it, that it was instituted of God to declare the remission of sins, Mark i. 4.

It is true, the Lord Christ submitted unto that ordinance. (and was baptized by John) who had no sin. But this belonged unto the obedience which God required of him, as, for our sakes, he was made under the law. He was to observe all ordinances and institutions of the worship of God, not for any need he had in his own Person of the especial ends and significations of some of them; yet, as he was our Sponsor, Surety, and Mediator, standing in our stead in all that he so did, he was to yield obedience unto them, that so he might fulfill all righteousness, Matth. iii. 13. So was he circumcised,

cumciſed, ſo he was baptized; both which had reſpect unto ſin, though abſolutely free from all ſin in his own perſon; and that becauſe he was free from no obedience unto any command of God.

But, as was ſaid, baptiſm itſelf, as appointed to be an ordinance of worſhip for ſinners to obſerve, was a declaration of that forgiveneſs that is with God. It was ſo in its firſt inſtitution. God calls a man in a marvellous and miraculous manner; gives him a miniſtry from heaven; commands him to go and baptize all thoſe who, confeſſing their ſins and profeſſing repentance of them, ſhould come to him, to have a teſtimony of forgiveneſs. And as to the eſpecial nature of this ordinance, he appoints it to be ſuch, as to repreſent the certainty and truth of his grace in pardon, unto their ſenſes by a viſible pledge. He lets them know that he would take away their ſin, wherein their ſpiritual defilement doth conſiſt, even as water takes away the outward filth of the body; ſo that hereby they ſhall be ſaved, as ſurely as Noah and his family were ſaved in the ark ſwiming upon the waters, 1 Pet. iii. 21. Now, how great a deceit muſt needs in this whole matter have been put upon poor ſinners, if it were not infallibly certain, that they might obtain forgiveneſs with God.

After the entrance of this ordinance in the miniſtry of John, the Lord Chriſt takes it into his own hand, and commands the obſervation of it unto all diſciples. I diſpute not now, who are the proper immediate objects of it; whether they only who actually can make profeſſion of their faith, or believers with their infant ſeed. For my part, I believe that all whom Chriſt loves and pardons are to be made partakers of the pledge thereof. And the ſole reaſon which they of old inſiſted on, why the infants of believing parents ſhould not be baptized; was; becauſe they thought they had no ſin, and therein we know their miſtake. But I treat not now of theſe things; only this I ſay is certain, that in the preſcription of this ordinance unto his church,

the

the great intention of the Lord Christ was to ascertain unto us the forgiveness of sins. And sinners are invited to a participation of this ordinance for that end, that they may receive the pardon of their sins; that is, an infallible pledge and assurance of it, Acts ii. 38. And the very nature of it declareth this to be its end, as was before intimated. This is another engagement of the truth, and faithfulness, and holiness of God, so that we cannot be deceived in this matter. *There is* saith God, *forgiveness with me;* saith the soul, "How "Lord shall I know, how shall I come to be assured of "it; for by reason of the perpetual accusations of "conscience, and the curse of the law upon the guilt "of my sin, I find it a very hard matter for me to be-"lieve? Like Gideon, I would have a token of it." Why, behold, saith God, 'I will give thee a pledge 'and a token of it which cannot deceive thee. When 'the world of old had been overwhelmed with a deluge 'of waters by reason of their sins, and those who re-'mained, though they had just cause to fear that the 'same judgment would again befal them or their pos-'terity, because they saw there was like to be the same 'cause of it, the thoughts and imaginations of the hearts 'of men being evil still, and that continually; to secure 'them against these fears, I told them, that I would 'destroy the earth no more with water; and I gave 'them a token of my faithfulness therein, by placing 'my bow in the cloud. And have I failed them? 'Though the sin and wickedness of the world hath 'been since that day unspeakably great; yet mankind 'is not drowned again, nor ever shall be: I will not 'deceive their expectation from the token I have given 'them. Wherever then there is a word of promise 'confirmed with a token, never fear a disappointment. 'But so is this matter. I have declared, that there is 'forgiveness with me, and to give assurance thereof, I 'have ordained this pledge and sign, as a seal of my 'word, to take away all doubts and suspicion of your 'being deceived. As the world shall be drowned no

'more

'more, ſo neither ſhall they who believe, come ſhort 'of forgiveneſs.'

And this is the uſe which we ought to make of this ordinance. It is God's ſecurity of the pardon of our ſins, which we may ſafely reſt in.

2. The ſame is the end of that other great ordinance of the church, the ſupper of the Lord: The ſame thing is therein confirmed unto us by another ſign, pledge, token, or ſeal. We have ſhewed before, what reſpect goſpel forgiveneſs hath unto the death or blood of Jeſus Chriſt. That is the means whereby for us it is procured, the way whereby it comes forth from God, unto the glory of his righteouſneſs and grace, which afterwards muſt be more diſtinctly inſiſted on. This ordinance therefore, deſigned and appointed on purpoſe for the repreſentation and calling to remembrance of the death of Chriſt, with the communication of the benefits thereof unto them that believe, doth principally intend our faith and comfort in the truth under conſideration; and therefore in the very inſtitution of it, beſides the general end before mentioned, which had been ſufficient for our ſecurity, there is moreover added an eſpecial mention of the forgiveneſs of ſin: For ſo ſpeaks our Saviour in the inſtitution of it, for the uſe of the church unto the end of the world, Matth. xxvii. 28. *This is my blood of the new teſtament, which is ſhed for many for the remiſſion of ſins.* As if he had ſaid, "The end for which I have appointed the obſervance "of this duty and ſervice unto you, is, that I may teſ- "tify thereby unto you, that by my blood, the ſacrifice "of myſelf, and the atonement made thereby, I have "purchaſed for you the remiſſion of your ſins, which you "ſhall aſſuredly be made partakers of." And more I ſhall not add unto this conſideration, becauſe the death of Chriſt reſpected in this ordinance, will again occur unto us.

3. What is the end of all church order, aſſemblies, and worſhip? What is a church? Is it not a company of ſinners gathered together, according unto God's ap-

pointment

pointment, to give glory and praise to him for pardoning grace, for the forgiveness of sins, and to yield him that obedience which he requires from us, on the account of his having so dealt with us? This is the nature, this is the end of a church. He that understandeth it not, he that useth it not unto that end, doth but abuse that great institution. And such abuse the world is full of. Some endeavour to make their own secular advantages by the pretence of the church: Some discharge the duty required in it, with some secret hopes that it shall be their righteousness before God: Some answer only their light and convictions in an empty profession. This alone is the true end, the true use of it. We assemble ourselves, to learn that there is forgiveness with God through Christ; to pray that we may be made partakers of it; to bless and praise God for our interest in it; to engage ourselves unto that obedience which he requires upon the account of it. And were this constantly upon our minds, and in our designs, we might be more established in the faith of it, than it may be the most of us are.

Sixthly, One particular instance more of this nature shall conclude this evidence: God hath commanded us, the Lord Christ hath taught us, to pray for the pardon of sin, which gives us unquestionable security that it may be attained, that it is to be found in God; for the clearing whereof observe.

1. That the Lord Christ, in the revelation of the will of God unto us, as unto the duty that he required at our hands, hath taught and instructed us to pray for the forgiveness of sin. It is one of the petitions which he hath left on record for our use and imitation, in that summary of all prayer which he hath given us, Matth. vi. 12. Forgive us our debts, our trespasses, our sins. Some contend that this is a form of prayer, to be used in the prescript limited words of it; all grant, that it is a rule for prayer, comprizing the heads of all necessary things, that we are to pray for, and obliging us to make supplication for them. So then, upon the author-

authority of God, revealed unto us by Jeſus Chriſt, we are bound in duty to pray for pardon of ſins, or forgiveneſs.

2. On this ſuppoſition, it is the higheſt blaſphemy and reproach of God imaginable, to conceive that there is not forgiveneſs with him for us. Indeed, if we ſhould go upon our own heads, without his warrant and authority, to aſk any thing at his hand, we might well expect to meet with diſappointment. For what ſhould encourage us unto any ſuch boldneſs? But now when God himſelf ſhall command us to come, and aſk any thing from him, ſo making it thereby our duty, and that the neglect thereof ſhould be our great ſin and rebellion againſt him; to ſuppoſe he hath not the thing in his power to beſtow on us, or that his will is wholly averſe from ſo doing, is to reproach him with want of truth, faithfulneſs and holineſs, and not to be God. For what ſincerity can be in ſuch proceedings? Is it conſiſtent with any divine excellency? Could it have any other end, but to deceive poor creatures? either to delude them if they do pray according to his command, or to involve them in farther guilt, if they do not? God forbid any ſuch thoughts ſhould enter into our hearts. But.

3. To put this whole matter out of queſtion, God hath promiſed to hear our prayers, and in particular thoſe which we make unto him for the forgiveneſs of ſin. So our Saviour hath aſſured us, that what we aſk in his name, it ſhall be done for us. And he hath, as we have ſhewed, taught us to aſk this very thing of God, as our heavenly Father; that is, in his name: For in and through him alone is he a Father unto us, I need not inſiſt on particular promiſes to this purpoſe, they are, as you know, multiplied in the ſcriptures.

What hath been ſpoken may ſuffice to eſtabliſh our preſent argument, namely, that God's preſcription of religious worſhip unto ſinners, doth undeniably prove, that with him there is forgiveneſs; eſpecially conſidering, that the principle part of the worſhip ſo preſcribed

and appointed by him, are peculiarly deſigned to confirm us in the faith thereof.

And this is the deſign of the words that we do inſiſt upon; *There is forgiveneſs with thee, that thou mayeſt be feared.* The fear of God, as we have ſhewed in the Old Teſtament, doth frequently expreſs, not that gracious affection of our minds, which is diſtinctly ſo called but that whole worſhip of God, wherein that and all other gracious affections towards God are to be exerciſed. Now the pſalmiſt tells us, that the foundation of this fear or worſhip, and the only motive and encouragement for ſinners to engage in it, and give up themſelves unto it, is this, that there is forgiveneſs with God. Without this, no ſinner could fear, ſerve, or worſhip him: This therefore is undeniably proved by the inſtitution of this worſhip, which was propoſed unto confirmation.

The end of all theſe things, as we ſhall afterwards at large declare, is to encourage poor ſinners to believe, and to evidence how inexcuſable they will be left, who, notwithſtanding all this, do through the power of their luſts and unbelief, refuſe to come to God in Chriſt that they may be pardoned. Yea, the laying open of the certainty and fulneſs of the evidence given unto this truth, makes it plain and conſpicuous, whence it is that men periſh in and for their ſins. Is it for want of mercy, goodneſs, grace or patience in God? Is it thro' any defect in the mediation of the Lord Chriſt? Is it for want of the mightieſt encouragements, and moſt infallible aſſurances, that with God there is forgiveneſs? Not at all, but merely on the account of their own obſtinacy, ſtubbornneſs and perverſneſs; they will not come unto this light; yea, they hate it, becauſe their deeds are evil. They will not come to Chriſt, that they may have life. It is merely darkneſs, blindneſs, and love of ſin, that brings men to deſtruction. And this is laid open, and all pretences and excuſes are removed, and the ſhame of mens luſts made naked by the full

full confirmation of this truth, which God hath furnished us withal.

Take heed you that hear or read these things, if they were not mixed with faith, they will add greatly to your misery. Every argument will be your torment. But these considerations must be insisted on afterwards.

Moreover, if you will take into your minds what hath been delivered in particular, concerning the nature and end of the worship of God, which you attend unto, you may be instructed in the use and due observation of it. When you address yourselves unto it, remember that this is that which God requires of you who are sinners; that this he would not have done, but with thoughts and intention of mercy for sinners. Bless him with all your souls, that this is laid as the foundation of all that you have to do with him. You are not utterly cast off, because you are sinners. Let this support and warm your hearts, when you go to hear, to pray, or any duty of worship. Consider what is your principle work in the whole. You are going to deal with God about forgiveness, in the being, causes, consequents, and effects of it. Hearken what he speaks, declares or reveals about it; mix his revelation and promises with faith. Enquire diligently into all the obedience and thankfulness, all those duties of holiness, and righteousness, which he justly expects from them who are made partakers of it; so shall you observe the worship of God unto his glory, and your own advantage.

The giving and establishing of the new covenant another evidence of forgiveness with God.------ The oath of God engaged in the confirmation thereof.

VIII. Another evidence hereof may be taken from the making, establishing and ratifying of the new covenant. That God would make a new covenant with

his people is often promiſed, often declared. See among other places, Jer. xxxi. 31, 32. and that he hath done ſo accordingly, the apoſtle doth at large manifeſt, Heb. viii. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. Now, here ſundry things unto our preſent purpoſe may be conſidered. For,

1. It is ſuppoſed that God had before made another covenant with mankind. With reference hereunto is this ſaid to be a new one. It is ſuppoſed unto another that was before it, and in compariſon whereof that is called old, and this ſaid to be new, as the apoſtle ſpeaks expreſly in the place before-mentioned. Now, a covenant between God and man is a thing great and marvellous, whether we conſider the nature of it, or the ends of it; In its own nature it is a convention, compact and agreement, for ſome certain ends and purpoſes between the holy creator and his poor creatures. How infinite, how inſpeakable muſt needs the grace and condeſcenſion of God in this matter be? For what is poor miſerable man, that God ſhould ſet his heart upon him that he ſhould as it were give bounds to his ſovereignty over him, and enter into terms of agreement with him? For whereas before, he was a mere object of his abſolute dominion, made at his will, and for his pleaſure, and on the ſame reaſons to be cruſhed at any time into nothing; now he hath a bottom, and ground given him, to ſtand upon, wherein to expect good things from God upon the account of his faithfulneſs and righteouſneſs. God, in a covenant gives thoſe holy properties of his nature unto his creatures; as his hand or arm for him to lay hold upon, and by them to plead and argue with him. And without this, a man could have no foundation for any intercourſe or communion with God, or of any expectation from him, nor any direction how to deal with him in any of his concernments. Great and ſignal then was the condeſcenſion in God, to take his poor creature into covenant with himſelf. And eſpecially will this be manifeſt, if we conſider the ends of it, and why it is that God thus deals with

with man. Now theſe are no other, than that man might ſerve him aright, be bleſſed by him, and be brought unto the everlaſting enjoyment of him, all unto his glory. Theſe are the ends of every covenant that God takes us into with himſelf; and theſe are the whole of man. No more is required of us in a way of duty; no more can be required by us to make us bleſſed and happy, but what is contained in them. That we might live to God, be accepted with him, and come to the eternal fruition of him, is the whole man; all that we were made for, or are capable of; and theſe are the ends of every covenant that God makes with man; being all compriſed in that ſolemn word, that *he will be their God, and they ſhall be his people.*

2. This being the nature, this the end of a covenant, there muſt be ſome great and important cauſe to change, alter and abrogate a covenant once made and eſtabliſhed, to lay aſide one covenant, and to enter into another. And yet this the apoſtle, ſays expreſly that God had done, Heb. viii 13. and proves it, becauſe himſelf calls that which he promiſed, a new covenant; which undeniably confirms two things: *Firſt*, That the other was become old; and *Secondly*, That being become ſo, it was changed, altered, and removed. I know the apoſtle ſpeaks immediately of the old adminiſtration of the covenant under the Old Teſtament, of Moſaical inſtitutions; but he doth ſo with reverence unto that revival which in it was given to the firſt covenant made with Adam. For, in the giving of the law, and the curſe wherewith it was accompanied, which were immixed with that adminiſtration of the covenant, there was a ſolemn revival and repreſentation of the firſt covenant, and its ſanction, whereby it had life and power given it to keep the people in bondage all their days. And the end of the abolition or taking away of the legal adminiſtration of the covenant, was merely to take out of God's dealing with his people, all uſe and remembrance of the firſt covenant. As was ſaid therefore, to take away, diſannul, and change a covenant ſo made

made, ratified, and eſtabliſhed betwixt God and man, is a matter that muſt be reſolved into ſome cogent, important, and indiſpenſible cauſe. And this will the more evidently appear, if we conſider:

Firſt, In general, That the firſt covenant was good, holy, righteous, and equal. It was ſuch as became God to make; and was every way the happineſs of the creature to accept of. We need no other argument to prove it holy and good, than this, that God made it. It was the effect of infinite holineſs, wiſdom, righteouſneſs, goodneſs, and grace. And therefore in itſelf was it every way perfect; for ſo are all the works of God. Beſides, it was ſuch, as man, when through his own fault he cannot obtain any good by it, and muſt periſh everlaſtingly by vertue of the curſe of it; yet cannot but ſubſcribe unto its righteouſneſs and holineſs. The law was the rule of it, therein is the tenor of it contained. Now, ſaith the apoſtle, whatever becomes of the ſin, and the ſinner, *the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and juſt, and good*, Rom. vii. 12. Holy in itſelf, and its own nature, as being the order and conſtitution of the moſt holy God. Juſt and equal with reference unto us; ſuch as we have no reaſon to complain of, or repine againſt the authority of it; and the terms of it are moſt righteous. And not only ſo, but it is good alſo, that which notwithſtanding the appearance of rigour and ſeverity, which it is accompanied withal, had in it an exceeding mixture of goodneſs and grace, both in the obedience conſtituted in it, and the reward annexed unto it; as might be more fully manifeſted, were that our preſent work.

Secondly, In particular, it was good, holy, and righteous in all the commands of it, in the obedience which it required. And two things there were that rendred it exceeding righteous, in reference unto its precepts or commands. 1*ſt*, That they were all ſuited unto the principles of the nature of man created by God, and in the regular acting whereof conſiſted his perfection. God in the firſt covenant required nothing of man, preſcribed nothing

nothing unto him, but what there was a principle for the doing and accomplishing of it ingrafted and implanted on his nature; which rendred all those commands equal, holy, and good. For what need any man complain of that which requires nothing of him, but what he is from his own frame and principles inclined unto? 2*dly*, All the commands of it were proportionate unto the strength and ability of them to whom they were given. God, in that covenant, required nothing of any man, but what he had before enabled him to perform; nothing above his strength, or beyond his power; and thence was it also righteous. 3*dly*, It was exceeding good, holy, and righteous, upon the account of its promises and rewards. Do this, saith the covenant: this which thou art able to do, which the principles of thy nature are fitted for, and inclined unto. Well, what shall be the issue thereof? Why, do this and live, life is promised unto obedience, and that such a life, as both for the present and future condition of the creature, was accompanied with every thing that was needful to make it blessed and happy. Yea, this life having in it the eternal enjoyment of God, God himself as a reward, was exceedingly above whatever the obedience of man could require as due, or have any reason, on any other account, but merely of the goodness of God, to expect.

Thirdly, There was provision in that covenant for the preservation and manifestation of the glory of God, whatever was the event on the part of man. This was provided for in the wisdom and righteousness of God. Did man continue in this obedience, and fulfil the terms of the covenant; all things were laid in subserviency to the eternal glory of God in his reward. Herein would he for ever have manifested and exalted the glory of his holiness, power, faithfulness, righteousness and goodness. As an almighty Creator, and preserver, as a faithful God, and righteous rewarder, would he have been glorified. On supposition on the other side, that man by sin and rebellion should transgress the terms and tenor

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of this covenant, yet God had made proviſion that no detriment unto his glory ſhould enſue thereon. For by the conſtitution of a puniſhment proportionable in his juſtice unto that ſin and demerit, he had provided, that the glory of his holineſs, righteouſneſs, and veracity in his threatnings, ſhould be exalted, and that to all eternity. God would have loſt no more glory and honour by the ſin of man, than by the ſin of angels which in his infinite wiſdom and righteouſneſs is become a great theatre of his eternal glory. For he is no leſs excellent in his greatneſs and ſeverity, than in his goodneſs and power.

Wherefore, we may now return unto our former enquiry. All things being thus excellently and admirably diſpoſed in infinite wiſdom and holineſs in this covenant, the whole duty and bleſſedneſs of man being fully provided for, and the glory of God abſolutely ſecured upon all events, what was the reaſon that God left not all things to ſtand or fall according to the terms of it? Wherefore doth he reject and lay aſide this covenant, and promiſe to make another, and do ſo accordingly? Certain it is, that he might have continued it with a bleſſed ſecurity to his own glory; and he makes *all things for himſelf, even the wicked for the day of evil.*

God himſelf ſhews what was the only and ſole reaſon of this diſpenſation, Heb. viii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. The ſum of it is this. Notwithſtanding the bleſſed conſtitution of the firſt covenant, yet there was no proviſion for the pardon of ſin, no room or place for forgiveneſs in it; but on ſuppoſition that man ſinned, he was in that covenant left remedileſs. God had not in it revealed that there was any ſuch thing as forgiveneſs with him; nor had any ſinner the leaſt hope or grounds of expectation from thence of any ſuch thing in him. Die he muſt, and periſh, and that without remedy or recovery. Now, ſaith God, this muſt not be. Mercy, goodneſs, grace require another ſtate of things. This covenant will not manifeſt them; their effects will not be communicated to poor ſinners by it. Hence, ſaith he,

he, "It is faulty, that is defective; I will not loſe the "glory of them, nor ſhall ſinners be unrelieved by "them: And therefore, altho' I may ſtrictly tie up all "mankind unto the terms of this; yet, I will make "another covenant with them, wherein they ſhall know "and find, that there is forgiveneſs with me, that they "may fear me."

Now, next to the blood of Chriſt, whereby this covenant was ratified and confirmed, this is the greateſt evidence that can poſſibly be given, that there is forgiveneſs with God. To what end elſe doth God make this great alteration in the effects of his will, in his way of dealing with mankind? As forgiveneſs of ſin is expreſly contained in the tenor and words of the covenant, ſo ſet it aſide, and it will be of no more uſe or advantage than the former. For, as this covenant is made directly with ſinners, nor was there any one in the world when God made it, that was not a ſinner, nor is it of uſe unto any but ſinners, ſo is forgiveneſs of ſins the very life of it.

Hence we may ſee two things. *Firſt*, The greatneſs of forgiveneſs, that we may learn to value it: and *Secondly*, The certainty of it, that we may learn to believe it.

Firſt, The greatneſs of it. God would not do ſo great a thing as that mentioned, but for a great, the greateſt end. Had it not been a matter of the greateſt importance unto the glory of God, and the good of the ſouls of men, God would not for the ſake of it, have laid aſide one covenant, and made another. We may evidently ſee how the heart of God was ſet upon it, how his nature and will were engaged in it. All this was done that we might be pardoned. The old glorious fabric of obedience and rewards ſhall be taken down to the ground, that a new one may be erected for the honour and glory of forgiveneſs. God forbid that we ſhould have ſlight thoughts of that which was ſo ſtrangely and wonderfully brought forth, wherein God had as it were embarked his great glory. Shall all this be

done for our ſakes, and ſhall we undervalue it, or diſeſteem it? God forbid. God could, if I may ſo ſay, more eaſily have made a new world of innocent creatures, and have governed them by the old covenant, than have eſtabliſhed this new one for the ſalvation of poor ſinners; but then, where had been the glory of forgiveneſs? It could never have been known that there was forgiveneſs with him. The old covenant could not have been preſerved, and ſinners pardoned. Wherefore, God choſe rather to leave the covenant, than ſinners unrelieved, than grace unexalted, and pardon unexerciſed. Prize it, as you prize your ſouls, and give glory unto God for it, as all thoſe that believe will do unto eternity.

Secondly, For the ſecurity of it, that we may believe it. What greater can be given? God deceiveth no man, no more than he is deceived. And what could God, that cannot lie, do more to give us ſatisfaction herein, than he hath done? Would you be made partakers of this forgiveneſs? Go unto God, ſpread before him this whole matter; plead with him, that he himſelf hath ſo far laid aſide the firſt covenant, of his own gracious will, as to make a new one; and that merely becauſe it had no forgiveneſs in it. This he hath made on purpoſe, that it might be known, that there is forgiveneſs in him. And ſhall not we now be made partakers of it? Will he now deny that unto us, which he hath given ſuch aſſurance of, and raiſed ſuch expectations concerning it? Nothing can here wrong us, nothing can ruin us but unbelief. Lay hold on this covenant, and we ſhall have pardon. This God expreſſeth, Iſa. xxvii, 4, 5. Will we continue on the old bottom of the firſt covenant? All that we can do thereon, is but to ſet thorns and briars in the way of God, to ſecure ourſelves from his coming againſt us, and upon us, with his indignation and fury. Our ſins are ſo, and our righteouſneſs is no better. And what will be the iſſue? both they and we ſhall be trodden down, conſumed, and burnt up. What way then, what remedy

medy is left unto us? Only this of laying hold on the arm and ſtrength of God in that covenant, wherein forgiveneſs of ſin is provided. Therein alone he ſaith, *Fury is not in me;* and the end will be, that we ſhall have peace with him both here and for ever.

IX. The oath of God, engaged and interpoſed in this matter, is another evidence of the truth inſiſted on. Now, becauſe this is annexed unto the covenant before mentioned, and is its eſtabliſhment, I ſhall paſs it over the more briefly. And in it we may conſider;

Firſt, The nature of the oath of God: The apoſtle tells us, that he ſware by himſelf: And he gives this reaſon of it, becauſe he had no greater to ſwear by, Heb. vi. 13. An oath for the confirmation of any thing, is an invocation of a ſupreme power that can judge of the truth that is ſpoken, and vindicate the breach of the engagement. This God hath none other but himſelf, *Becauſe he could ſwear by no greater, he ſware by himſelf.* Now, this God doth, *1ſt*, By expreſs affirmation that he hath ſo ſworn by himſelf, which was the form of the firſt ſolemn oath of God, Gen. xxii. 16. *By myſelf have I ſworn, ſaith the Lord.* The meaning whereof is, I have taken upon my myſelf as I am God, or let me not be ſo, if I perform not this thing. And this is expreſſed by his ſoul, Jer. li. 14. *The Lord of Hoſts hath ſworn by his Soul*, that is, by himſelf, as we render the words. *2dly*, God doth it by the eſpecial interpoſition of ſome ſuch property of his nature, as is ſuited to give credit and confirmation to the word ſpoken; as to his holineſs, Pſal. lxxxix. 35. *I have ſworn by my holineſs:* So alſo Amos iv. 2. Sometimes by his life, *As I live*, ſaith the Lord. In the Hebrew, *I live, ſaith God*, it ſhall be ſo. And ſometimes by his name, Jer. xliv. 26. God as it were engageth the honour and glory of the properties of his nature for the certain accompliſhment of the things mentioned. And this is evident from the manner of the expreſſion, as in that place of Pſal. lxxxix. 35. *Once have I ſworn by my holineſs, that*

I will not lie unto David; ſo we: In the original the words are elliptical; *If I lie unto David,* that is, Let me not be ſo, nor be eſteemed to be ſo, *if I lie unto David.*

Secondly, For the end of his oath; God doth not give it to make his word or promiſe ſure and ſtedfaſt, but to give aſſurance and ſecurity unto us of their accompliſhment. Every word of God is ſure and certain truth itſelf, becauſe it is his; and he might juſtly require of us the belief of it, without any further atteſtation. But yet, knowing what great objections Satan and our own unbelieving hearts will raiſe againſt his promiſes, at leaſt as to our own concernment in them, to confirm our minds, and to take away all pretences of unbelief, he interpoſeth his oath in this matter. What can remain of diſtruſt in ſuch a caſe? if there be a matter in doubt between men, and an oath be interpoſed in the confirmation of that which is called in queſtion, it is an end, as the apoſtle tells us, unto them of all ſtrife, Heb. vi. 16. How much more ought it to be ſo on the part of God, when his oath is engaged! And the apoſtle declares this end of his oath, it is to ſhew the immutability of his counſel, Heb. vi. 17. His counſel was declared before in the promiſe; but now ſome doubt or ſtrife may ariſe, whether on one occaſion or other, God may not change his counſel; or whether he hath not changed it with ſuch conditions as to render it uſeleſs unto us? In what caſe ſoever it be, to remove all doubts and ſuſpicions of this nature, God adds his oath, manifeſting the unqueſtionable immutability of his counſel and promiſes. What therefore is thus confirmed, is aſcertained unto the height of what any thing is capable of. And not to believe it, is the height of impiety.

Thirdly, In this interpoſition of God by an oath, there is unſpeakable condeſcenſion of grace, which is both an exceeding great motive unto faith, and a great aggravation of unbelief. For what are we, that the holy and bleſſed God ſhould thus condeſcend unto us,

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as for our satisfaction and surety, to engage himself by an oath! One said well of old; *Fœlices nos quorum causa Deus jurat; O infœlices, si nec juranti Deo credimus.* It is an inestimable advantage that God should for our sakes engage himself by his oath. So it will be our misery, if we believe him not, when he swears unto us. What can we now object against what is thus confirmed? What pretence, colour, or excuse can we have for our unbelief? How just, how righteous, how holy must their destruction be, who, upon this strange, wonderful, unexpected warranty, refuse to set their seal, that God is true.

These things being premised, we may consider how variously God hath engaged his oath, that there is forgiveness with him. *First*, He sweareth that he hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he repent and live, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. *As I live* (saith the Lord) *I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner:* Now, without forgiveness in him, every sinner must die, and that without remedy. Confirming therefore with his oath, that it is his will the sinner should return, repent and live, he doth, in the first place swear by himself, that there is forgiveness with him for these sinners that shall so repent and turn unto him.

Again, whereas the great means he hath appointed for the forgiveness of sins, is by the mediation of the Lord Christ, as we shall afterwards shew, he hath on several occasions confirmed his purpose in him, and the counsel of his will by his oath. By this oath he promised him unto Abraham and David of old, which proved the foundation of the church's stability in all generations; and also of their security and assurance of acceptance with him; see Luke i. 73, 74, 75 And in taking upon him that office, whereby in an especial manner the forgiveness of sins was to be procured, namely, of his being a priest to offer sacrifice, to make an atonement for sinners, he confirmed it unto him, and him in it by his oath, Heb. vii. 20. *He was not made a priest without an oath.* And to what end? Namely, that he might

might be a *ſurety of a better teſtament*, ver. 22. And what was that *better teſtament?* Why, that which brought along with it the forgiveneſs of ſin, chap. viii. 12, 13. So that it was forgiveneſs which was ſo confirmed by the oath of God. Further, the apoſtle ſhews, that the great original promiſe made unto Abraham, being confirmed by the oath of God, all his other promiſes were in like manner confirmed. Whence he draws that bleſſed concluſion which we have, Heb. vi 17, 18. As to every one, ſaith he, that *flies for refuge to the hope that is ſet before him*, that is, who ſeeks to eſcape the guilt of ſin, the cūrſe and the ſentence of the law, by an application of himſelf unto God in Chriſt for pardon, he hath the oath of God to ſecure him that he ſhall not fail thereof. And thus are all the concernments of the forgiveneſs of ſin teſtified unto by the oath of God; which we have manifeſtedto be the higheſt ſecurity in this matter, thatGod can give, or that we are capable of.

The name of God confirming the truth and reality of forgiveneſs with him. As alſo the ſame is done by the properties of his nature.

X. Another foundation of this truth, and infallible evidence of it, may be taken from that ſpecial name and title which God takes unto himſelf in this matter; for he owns the name of the *God of pardons*, or the *God of forgiveneſs*. So he is called, Nehem. ix. 17. we have rendered the words, *Thou art a God ready to forgive;* but they are, as was ſaid, (in the Heb :) *And thou art a God of pardons, forgiveneſs or propitiations.* That is his name, which he owneth, which he accepteth of the aſcription of unto himſelf. The name whereby he will be known. And to clear this evidence, we muſt take in ſome conſiderations of the name of God, and the uſe thereof. As

1. The name of God is that whereby he reveals himſelf unto us, whereby he would have us know him, and own him. It is ſomething expreſſive of his nature or properties which he hath appropriated unto himſelf. What-

Whatever therefore any name of God expreſſeth him to be, that he is, that we may expect to find him; for he will not deceive us by giving himſelf a wrong or a falſe name. And on this account he requires us to truſt in his name, becauſe he will aſſuredly be found unto us, what his name imports. Reſting on his name, flying unto his name, calling upon his name, praiſing his name, things ſo often mentioned in the ſcripture, confirm the ſame unto us. Theſe things could not be our duty, if we might be deceived in ſo doing. God is then and will be to us what his name declareth.

2. On this ground and reaſon, God is ſaid then firſt to be known by any name, when thoſe, to whom he reveals himſelf, do in an eſpecial manner, reſt on that name by faith, and have that accompliſhed towards them which that name imports, ſignifies, or declares. And therefore God did not under the Old Teſtament, reveal himſelf to any by the name of the *Father of Jeſus Chriſt*, or the *Son incarnate*, becauſe the grace of it unto them was not to be accompliſhed, *God having provided ſome better thing for us, that they without us ſhould not be made perfect;* they were not entruſted with the full revelation of God, by all his bleſſed names. Neither doth God call us to truſt in any name of his, however declared or revealed, unleſs he gives it us in an eſpecial manner, by way of covenant, to reſt upon. So he ſpeaks, Exod. vi. 3. *I appeared unto Abraham, unto Iſaac, and to Jacob* (Heb) *in the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known unto them.* It is certain, that both theſe names of God, Eliſhaddai and Jehovah, were known among his people before. In the firſt mention we have of Abraham's addreſſing himſelf unto the worſhip of God, he makes uſe of the name Jehovah, Gen. xii. 7. *He built an alter unto Jehovah;* and ſo afterwards, not only doth Moſes make uſe of that name in the repetition of the ſtory, but it was alſo of frequent uſe among them. Whence then it is ſaid, that God appeared unto them by the name of Elſhaddai, but not by the name of Jehovah?

hovah? The reaſon is, becauſe that was the name God gave himſelf in the ſolemn confirmation of the covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. 1. (Heb.) I am *Elſhaddai, God Almighty*, God all ſufficient. And when Iſaac would pray for the bleſſing or the covenant on Jacob, he makes uſe of that name, Gen. xxviii. 3. *God Almighty bleſs thee.* He invocates that name of God which was engaged in the covenant made with his father Abraham, and himſelf. That therefore we may, with full aſſurance, reſt on the name of God, it is not only neceſſary, that God reveal that name to be his, but alſo that he give it out unto us for that end and purpoſe, that we might know him thereby, and place our truſt and confidence in him, according unto what that name of his imports. And this was the caſe wherever he revealed himſelf unto any in a peculiar manner, by an eſpecial name. So he did unto Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 13. *I am the God of Abraham and Iſaac;* aſſuring him, that as he dealt faithfully in his covenant with his fathers Abraham and Iſaac, ſo alſo he would deal with him: And Gen. xxxi 13. *I am the God of Bethel;* he who appeared unto thee there, and bleſſed thee, and will continue ſo to do. But when the ſame Jacob comes to aſk after another name of God, he anſwers him not, as it were commanding him to live by faith on what he was pleaſed to reveal. Now then, God had not made himſelf known to Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob by his name Jehovah, becauſe he had not peculiarly called himſelf unto them by that name, nor had engaged it in his covenant with them, although it were otherwiſe known unto them. They lived and reſted on the name of God Almighty, as ſuited to their ſupportment and conſolation in their wandering, helpleſs condition, before the promiſe was to be accompliſhed: But now, when God came to fulfil his promiſes, and to bring the people, by vertue of his covenant, into the land of Canaan, he reveals himſelf unto them by, and renews his covenant with them, in the name of Jehovah. And hereby did God declare, that he came to give ſtability

and

and accompliſhment unto his promiſes; to which end they were now to live upon this name of Jehovah, in an expectation of the fulfilling of the promiſes, as their fathers did on that of *God Almighty*, in an expectation of protection from him in their wandering ſtate and condition. Hence this name became the foundation of the Judaical church, and ground of the faith of them who did ſincerely believe in God therein. And it is ſtrangely fallen out in the providence of God, that ſince the Jews have rejected the covenant of their fathers, and are caſt out of the covenant of their unbelief that they have utterly forgotten the name of God. No Jew in the world knows what it is, nor how to pronounce it, or make mention of it. I know, themſelves and others pretend ſtrange myſteries in the letters and vowels of that name, which make it ineffable: But the truth is, being caſt out of that covenant, which was built and eſtabliſhed on that name, in the juſt judgment of God, through their own blindneſs and ſuperſtition, they are no more able to make mention of it, or to take it into their mouths. It is required then, that the name of God be given unto us as engaged in covenant, to ſecure our expectation, that he will be unto us according to his name.

3. All the whole gracious name of God, every title that he hath given himſelf, every aſcription of honour unto himſelf that he hath owned, is confirmed unto us (unto as many as believe) in Jeſus Chriſt. For as he hath declared unto us the whole name of God, John xvii. 6. ſo not this or that promiſe of God, but *all the promiſes of God are in him, yea and amen.* So that, as of old, every particular promiſe that God made unto the people, ſerved eſpecially for the particular occaſion on which it was given, and each name of God was to be reſted on, as to that diſpenſation whereunto it was ſuited to give relief and confidence; as the name of Elſhaddai to Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, and the name Jehovah to Moſes and the people; ſo now, by Jeſus Chriſt and in him, every particular promiſe belongs

unto believers in all their occaſions; and every name of God whatever, is theirs alſo, at all times, to reſt upon, and put their truſt in. Thus the particular promiſe made unto Joſhua, at his entrance into Canaan, to encourage and ſtrengthen him in that great enterprize of conquering the land, is by the apoſtle applied unto all believers, in all their occaſions whatever; *I will never leave thee, nor forſake thee*, Heb. xiii. 5. So likewiſe doth every name of God belong now unto us, as if it had in a particular manner been engaged in covenant unto us; and that becauſe the whole covenant is ratified and confirmed unto us by Jeſus Chriſt, 2 Cor. vi. 18. chap. vii. 1. This then abſolutely ſecures unto us an intereſt in the name of God inſiſted on, the God of forgiveneſs, as if it had been given unto every one of us, to aſſure us thereof.

4. God takes this name, the God of forgiveneſs, to be his in a peculiar manner, as that whereby he will be diſtinguiſhed and known. He appropriates it to himſelf, as expreſſing that which the power and goodneſs of no other can extend unto. *There are lords many, and gods many* ſaith the apoſtle; λεγόμενοι θεοὶ, ſome that are called ſo; ſuch as ſome account ſo to be. How is the true God diſtinguiſhed from theſe gods by reputation? He is ſo by this name, he is the *God of pardons*, Mic. vii. 18. *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?* This is his prerogative; herein none is equal to him, like him, or a ſharer with him. Who is a God like unto thee, that may be called a *God of pardons*. The vanities of the nations cannot give them this rain; they have no refreſhing ſhowers of mercy and pardon in their power. Neither angels, nor ſaints, nor images, nor popes, can pardon ſin. By this name doth he diſtinguiſh himſelf from them all.

5. To be known by this name, is the great glory of God in this world. When Moſes deſired to ſee the glory of God, the Lord tells him, *that he could not ſee his face*, Exod. xxxiii. 18, 20. The face of God, or the glorious

glorious majeſty of his being, his eſſential glory, is not to be ſeen of any in this life; we can not ſee him as he is. But the glorious manifeſtation of himſelf we may behold and contemplate. This we may ſee as the back-parts of God; that ſhadow of his excellencies which he caſteth forth in his paſſing by us in his works and diſpenſations. This Moſes ſhall ſee. And wherein did it conſiſt? Why, in the revelation and declaration of this name of God, chap. xxxiv. 6, 7. *The Lord paſſeth by before him, and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, ſong-ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs and in truth, keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſions, and ſin.* To be known by this name, to be honoured, feared, believed, as that declares him, is the great glory of God. And ſhall this fail us? Can we be deceived truſting in it, or expecting that we ſhall find him to be what his name declares? God forbid.

Let us lay together theſe conſiderations, and we ſhall find that they will give us another ſtable foundation of the truth inſiſted on; and a great encouragement to poor ſinful ſouls to draw nigh to God in Chriſt for pardon. God hath no name but what he gives unto himſelf. Nor is it lawful to know him, or call him otherwiſe; as he calls himſelf, ſo is he. What his name imports, ſo is his nature. Every name alſo of God is engaged in Jeſus Chriſt in the covenant, and is propoſed unto us to place our truſt and confidence in. Now, this is his name and his memorial, even the God of forgiveneſs. By this he diſtinguiſheth himſelf from all others, and expreſſeth it as the principle title of his honour, or his peculiar glory. According to this name therefore, all that believe ſhall aſſuredly find, *There is forgiveneſs with him.*

XI. The conſideration of the eſſential properties of the Nature of God, and what is required to the manifeſtation of them, will afford us further aſſurance hereof. Let us to this end take in the enſuing obſevations.

First, God being absolutely perfect, and absolutely self-sufficient, was eternally glorious, and satisfied with and in his own holy excellencies and perfections, before, and without the creation of all or any thing, by the putting forth, or the exercise of his almighty power. The making therefore of all things depends on a mere sovereign act of the will and pleasure of God. So the whole creation makes its acknowledgement, Rev. iv. 11. chap. v. 12. *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honour and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.* God could have omitted all this great work, without the least impeachment of his glory. Not one holy property of his nature would have been diminished or abated in its eternal glory by that omission. This then depended on a pure act of his will and choice.

Secondly, On supposition that God would work *ad extra*, by his power produce any thing without himself, it was absolutely necessary that himself should be the end of his so doing. For, as before the production of all things, there was nothing that could be the end why any of them should be brought forth out of nothing, or towards which they should be disposed; so God being an infinite agent, in wisdom and understanding and power, he could have no end in his actings, but that also which is infinite. It is therefore natural and necessary unto God to do all things for himself. It is impossible he should have any other end; and he hath done so accordingly, Prov. xvi. 4. *The Lord hath made all things for himself.* He aimed at himself in all that he did; there being no other infinite good for him to make his object, and his end, but himself alone.

Thirdly, This doing things, all things for himself, cannot intend an addition or acruement thereby of any new real good unto himself; his absolute eternal perfection and all sufficiency render this impossible. God doth not become more powerful, great, wise, just, holy, good or gracious by any of his works, by any thing that

that he doth; he can add nothing to himself. It must therefore be the manifestation and declaration of the holy properties of his nature that he doth intend and design in his works. And there are two things required hereunto.

1*st*, That he make them known; that by ways suited to his infinite wisdom, he doth declare that such properties do belong unto him; as also what is the nature of them, according as the creature is able to apprehend.

So he doth things to make his power known, to shew his power, and to declare his name through the earth, Rom. ix. 17, 22. So it was said, that by the works of creation, τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, *that which may be known of God* is made manifest, Rom. i. 19, 20. And what is that? Even the natural essential properties of his being; his *eternal power and Godhead.* To this head are referred all those promises of God that he would glorify himself, and the prayers of his saints that he would do so. And the attestations given unto it in the scripture, that he hath done so. He hath made known his wisdom, holiness, power, goodness, self-sufficiency, and the like perfections of his nature.

2*dly*, That he attain an ascription, an attribution of praise and glory to himself upon their account. His design is to be *admired in all them that believe*, 2 Thess. i. 10. That is, that upon an apprehension of his excellencies, which he hath revealed; and as he hath revealed them, they should admire, adore, applaud, glorify, and praise him, worship, believe and trust in him, in all things, and endeavour the enjoyment of him as an eternal reward. And this is also threefold.

(1.) Interpretative; so the inanimate and brute creatures ascribe unto God the glory of his properties, even by what they are to do. By what they are in their beings, and their observation of the law and inclination of their nature, they give unto God the glory of that wisdom and power whereby they are made; and of that sovereignty whereon they depend. Hence nothing

thing more frequent in the praiſes of God of old, than the calling of the inanimate creatures, heaven and earth, winds, ſtorms, thunder, and the beaſts of the field, to give praiſe and glory to God. That is, by what they are, they do ſo, in as much as from the impreſſion of God's glorious excellencies in their effects upon them, they are made known and manifeſt.

(2.) Involuntary in ſome rational creatures. Sinning men and angels have no deſign, no will, no deſire to give glory to God: They do their utmoſt endeavour to the contrary to hate him, reproach and blaſpheme him. But they cannot yet caſt off the yoke of God in their minds and conſciences; they are forced, and ſhall be for ever, to acknowledge that God is infinitely holy, infinitely wiſe, powerful, and righteous. And he hath the glory of all theſe properties from them, in their very deſires, that he were otherwiſe. When they would that God were not juſt to puniſh them, powerful to torment them, wiſe to find them out, holy to be diſpleaſed with their luſts and ſins, they do at the ſame time, in the ſame thing, own, acknowledge, and give unto God the glory of his being, juſtice, wiſdom, power and holineſs. When therefore God hath made known his properties, the aſcription of glory unto him on their account, is to rational creatures, natural and unavoidable.

(3.) It is voluntary in the reaſonable ſervice, worſhip, fear, truſt, obedience, of angels and men. God having revealed unto them the properties of his nature, they acknowledge, adore them, and place their confidence in them, and thereby glorify him as God. And this glorifying of God conſiſteth in three things.

1. In making the excellencies of God revealed unto us, the principle and chief object of all the moral actings of our ſouls, and of all the actings of our affections. To fear the Lord and his goodneſs, and to fear him for his goodneſs; to truſt in his power and faithfulneſs, to obey his authority, to delight in his will and grace,

grace, to love him above all, becauſe of his excellencies and beauty, this is to glorify him.

2. To pray for, and to rejoice in all the ways and means whereby he will, or hath promiſed further to manifeſt or declare theſe properties of his nature and his glory in them. What is the reaſon, why we pray for, long for the accompliſhment of the promiſes of God towards his ſaints, of his threatnings towards his enemies, of the fulfilling of the glorious works of his power and grace that yet remain to be done, of the coming of the kingdom of Chriſt, of the approach of glory? Is it not chiefly and principally, that the glorious excellencies of God's nature may be made more manifeſt, be more known, more exalted; that God may appear more as he is, and as he hath declared himſelf to be? This is to give glory to God. So likewiſe, our joy, rejoicing and ſatisfaction in any of the ways and works of God, it is ſolely on this account, that in them, God in his properties, that is, his power, wiſdom, holineſs, and the like, is revealed, declared, and made known.

3. In their joint actual celebration of his praiſes; which, as it is a duty of the greateſt importance, and which we are indeed of all others moſt frequently exhorted unto, and moſt earneſtly called upon for: So in the nature of it, it conſiſts in our believing, rejoicing expreſſion of what God is, and what he doth, that is, our admiring, adoring, and bleſſing him, becauſe of his holineſs, goodneſs, and the reſt of his properties, and his works of grace and power, ſuitable unto them. This it is to praiſe God, Rev. v.

Fourthly, Obſerve, that none of theſe properties of God can be thus manifeſted and known, nor himſelf be glorified for them, but by his declaration of them, and by their effects. We know no more of God than he is pleaſed to reveal unto us. I mean not mere revelation by his word, but any ways or means, whether by his word or by his works, or by impreſſions from the law of nature upon our hearts and minds. And whatever God thus declares of himſelf, he doth it by exerciſing

ciſing, putting forth and manifeſting the effects of it. So we know his power, wiſdom, goodneſs, and grace; namely, by the effects of them, or the works of God that proceed from them, and are ſuited unto them. And whatever is in God that is not thus made known, we cannot apprehend, nor glorify God on the account of it. God therefore doing all things, as hath been ſhewed, for the glory of theſe his properties, he doth ſo reveal them, and make them known.

Fifthly, Upon this deſign of God, it is neceſſary that he ſhould reveal and make known all the attributes and properties of his nature, in works and effects peculiarly proceeding from them, and anſwering unto them, that he might be glorified in them; and which, as the event manifeſts, that he hath done accordingly. For what reaſon can be imagined, why God will be glorified in one eſſential excellency of his nature, and not in another? Eſpecially muſt this be affirmed of theſe properties of the nature of God, which the event manifeſteth his principal glory to conſiſt in, and ariſe from, and the knowledge whereof is to the greateſt uſe, behoof and benefit unto the children of men, in reference unto his deſign towards them.

Sixthly, Theſe things being ſo, let us conſider how it ſtands in reference unto that which is under conſideration. God in the creation of all things, glorified or manifeſted his greatneſs, power, wiſdom and goodneſs, with many other properties of the like kind. But his ſovereignty, righteouſneſs, and holineſs, how are they declared hereby? Either not at all, or not in ſo evident a manner as is neceſſary, that he might be fully glorified in them, or for them. What then doth he do? Leave them in darkneſs, vailed, undiſcovered, ſatisfying himſelf in the glory of thoſe properties which his work of creation had made known? Was there any reaſon, why he ſhould do ſo, deſigning to do all things for himſelf, and for his own glory? Wherefore, he gives his holy law as a rule of obedience unto men and angels.

This

This plainly reveals his sovereignty or authority over them, his holiness and righteousness in the equity and purity of things he required of them; so that in and by these properties also he may be glorified. As he made all things for himself, that is, the manifestation of his greatness, power, wisdom, and goodness, so he gave the law for himself, that is, the manifestation of his authority, holiness, and righteousness. But is this all? Is there no remunerative justice in God, in a way of bounty? Is there not vindictive justice in him, in a way of severity? There is so, and in the pursuit of the design mentioned, they are also to be manifested, or God will not be glorified in them. This therefore he did also in the rewards and punishments that he annexed unto the law of obedience that he had prescribed. To manifest his remunerative justice, he promised a reward in a way of bounty, which the angels that sinned not were made partakers of; and in the penalty threatned, which sinning angels and men incurred, he revealed his vindictive justice in a way of severity. So are all these properties of God made known by their effects, and so is God glorified in them, or on their account.

But after all this, are there no other properties of his nature, divine excellencies that cannot be separated from this Being, which by none of these means, are so much as once intimated to be in him? It is evident that there are; such the mercy, grace, patience, long-suffering, compassion and the like: Concerning which observe,

1st, That where there are no objects of them, they cannot be declared, or manifested, or exercised. As God's power or wisdom could not be manifest, if there were no objects of them, no more can his grace or mercy. If never any stand in need of them, they can never be exercised, and consequently never be known. Therefore were they not revealed, neither by the creation of all things, nor by the law or its sanction, nor by the law written in our hearts. For all these suppose no objects of grace and mercy. For it is sinners only, and

ſuch as have made themſelves miſerable by ſin, that they can be exerciſed about.

2*dly*, There are no excellencies of God's nature, that are more expreſſive of divine goodneſs, lovelineſs and beauty, than theſe are, of mercy, grace, long-ſuffering, and patience; and therefore there is nothing that God ſo requireth our likeneſs unto him, in our conformity unto his image, as in theſe; namely, mercy, grace, and readineſs to forgive: And the contrary frame in any he doth of all things moſt abhor. *They ſhall have judgment without mercy, who ſhewed no mercy.* And therefore it is certain, that God will be glorified in the manifeſtation of theſe properties of his nature.

3*dly*, Theſe properties can be no otherwiſe exerciſed, and conſequently no otherwiſe known, but only in and by the pardon of ſin; which puts it beyond all queſtion, that there is forgiveneſs with God. God will not loſe the glory of theſe his excellencies; he will be revealed in them, he will be known by them, he will be glorified for them; which he could not be, if there were not forgiveneſs with him: So that here comes in, not only the truth, but the neceſſity of forgiveneſs alſo.

Forgiveneſs manifeſted in the ſending of the Son of God to die for ſin.------And from the obligation that is on us to forgive one another.

XII. In the next place, we ſhall proceed unto that evidence which is the center wherein all the lines of thoſe forgoing do meet and reſt: The fountain of all thoſe ſtreams of refreſhment that are in them, that which animates and gives life and efficacy unto them, This lies in God's ſending of his Son. The conſideration hereof will leave no pretence or excuſe unto unbelief in this matter.

To make this evidence more clear and legible, as to what is intended in it, we muſt conſider,

1. What

1. What was the riſe of this ſending, we ſpeak of.
2. Who it was that was ſent.
3. How or in what manner he was ſent.
4. Unto what end and purpoſe.

Firſt, The riſe and ſpring of it is to be conſidered. It came forth from the eternal mutual conſent and counſel of the Father and the Son, Zech. vi. 13. *The counſel of peace ſhall be between them both.* It is of Chriſt the Branch, of whom he ſpeaks. *He ſhall build the temple of the Lord, and he ſhall bear the glory. And ſhall ſit and rule upon his throne, and ſhall be a prieſt upon his throne, and the counſel of peace ſhall be between them both.* That is, between God the Father, who ſends him, and himſelf; There lay the counſel of peace-making between God and man, in due time accompliſhed by him who *is our peace*, Eph. ii. 16. So he ſpeaks, Prov. viii. 30, 31. *Then I was by him, as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight; rejoicing always before him. Rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the ſons of men.* They are the words of the Wiſdom, that is, of the Son of God. When was this done? Then I was with him. Why, before the mountains were ſettled, *whilſt as yet he had not made the earth nor the fields;* that is, before the creation of the world, or from eternity, ver. 25, 26. But how then could he rejoice in the habitable parts of the earth? And how could his delight be with the ſons of men? ſeeing as yet they were not? I anſwer, It was the counſel of peace towards them before mentioned, in the purſuit whereof he was to be ſent to converſe amongſt them on the earth. He rejoiced in the fore-thoughts of his being ſent to them, and the work he had to do for them. Then, with his own conſent and delight, was he foreordained unto his work, even before the *foundation of the world*, 1 Peter i. 20. and received of the Father, *the promiſe of eternal life, even before the world began*, Tit. i. 2. That is, to be given unto ſinners, by way of

forgiveneſs through his blood. So is this whole counſel expreſſed, Pſal. xl. 7, 8. Whence it is made uſe of by the apoſtle, Heb. x. 5, 6, 7. *Then ſaid I, lo I come in the volume of thy book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O God. Thy law is in the midſt of my heart.* There is the will of the Father in this matter, and the law of its performance; and there is the will of the Son, in anſwer thereunto; and his delight in fulfilling that law which was preſcribed unto him.

Let us now conſider, to what purpoſe was this eternal counſel of peace, this agreement of the Father and Son, from eternity about the ſtate and condition of mankind? If God would have left them all to periſh under the guilt of their ſins, there had been no need at all of any ſuch thoughts, deſign, or counſel. God had given unto them a law, righteous and holy, which if they tranſgreſſed, he had threatned them with eternal deſtruction. Under the rule, diſpoſal, and power of this law, he might have righteouſly left them to ſtand or fall, according to the verdict and ſentence thereof. But now he aſſures us, he reveals unto us, that he had other thoughts in this matter; that there were other counſels between the Father and the Son concerning us; and theſe ſuch as the Son was delighted in the proſpect of his accompliſhment of them. What can theſe thoughts and counſels be, but about a way for their deliverance, which could no otherwiſe be, but by the forgiveneſs of ſins? For whatever elſe be done, yet if God mark iniquities, there is none can ſtand. Hearken therefore, poor ſinner, and have hope. God is conſulting about thy deliverance and freedom: And what cannot the wiſdom and grace of the Father and Son effect and accompliſh? And to this end was the Son ſent into the world, which is the ſecond thing propoſed to conſideration.

Secondly, Whom did God ſend about this buſineſs? The ſcripture lays great weight and emphaſis on this conſideration, faith muſt do ſo alſo, John iii. 16. *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son:*

So

So 1 John iv 9. *In this was manifeſted the love of God towards us, becauſe that God ſent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* And again, ver. 10. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us; and ſent his Son to be the propitiation for our ſins.* And who is this that is thus ſent, and called the *only begotten Son of God?* Take a double deſcription of him, one out of the Old Teſtament, and another from the new. The firſt from Iſa. ix. 6. *To us a Child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulders, and his name ſhall be called Wonderful, Counſellor, the Mighty God, the everlaſting Father, the Prince of Peace:* The other from Heb. i. 2, 3. *God hath ſpoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom alſo he made the worlds. Who being the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his Perſon, upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himſelf purged our ſins, ſat down on the right-hand of the majeſty on high.* This is he who was ſent. In nature he was glorious; even over all, God bleſſed for ever: In anſwerableneſs unto the Father, the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon; poſſeſſed of all the ſame eſſential properties with him: So that, what we find in him, we may be aſſured of is in the Father alſo; for he that hath ſeen him, hath ſeen the Father, who is in him: In power omnipotent; for he made all things, and upholdeth all things with an unſpeakable facility, by the word of his power: In office, exalted over all, ſitting on the right-hand of the majeſty on high: In name, the mighty God, the everlaſting Father: So that whatever he came about, he will aſſuredly accompliſh and fulfil; for what ſhould hinder or let this mighty One from perfecting his deſign.

Now this conſideration raiſeth our evidence to that height, as to give an unqueſtionable aſſurance in this matter. Here is a near and a particular object for faith to be exerciſed about and to reſt in. Wherefore did this glorious Son of God come and tabernacle amongſt

mongſt poor ſinners? We beheld the glory of the eternal word, the glory of the only begotten of the Father; and he was made fleſh, ἐσκήνωσε, and pitched his tabernacle amongſt us, John i. 14. To What end? It was no other, but to work out, and accompliſh the eternal counſel of peace towards ſinners before mentioned, to procure for them, and to declare unto them, the forgiveneſs of ſin. And what greater evidence, what greater aſſurance can we have, that there is forgiveneſs with God for us? He himſelf hath given it as a rule, that what is done by giving an only begotten, or an only beloved Son, gives aſſured teſtimony of reality and ſincerity in the thing that is confirmed by it. So he ſays unto Abraham, Gen. xxii. 12. *Now I know that thou feareſt God, ſeeing that thou haſt not withheld thy ſon, thy only ſon from me.* This way it may be known, or no way. And they are bleſſed concluſions that faith may make from this conſideration; now, I know that there is forgiveneſs with God, ſeeing he hath not withheld his Son, his only Son, that he might accompliſh it. To this our purpoſe the apoſtle teacheth us to reaſon, Rom. viii. 32. *He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, How ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?*

What further can any ſoul deſire? What ground remains for unbelief to ſtand upon in this matter? Is there any thing more to be done herein? It was to manifeſt that there was forgiveneſs with him, and to make way for the exerciſe of it, that God ſent his Son; that the Son of God came into the world, as will afterwards more fully appear.

Thirdly, To this ſending of the Son of God to this purpoſe, there is evidence and ſecurity added from the manner wherein he was ſent. How was this? Not in glory, not in power, not in an open diſcovery of his eternal power and Godhead. Had it been ſo, we might have thought, that he had come merely to manifeſt and glorify himſelf in the world. And this he might have done without thoughts of mercy or pardon towards

us.

us. But he came quite in another manner; he was ſeen in the *likeneſs of ſinful fleſh*, Rom. viii. 3. *In the form of a ſervant*, Phil. ii. 10. Being *made of a woman under the law*, Gal. iv. 4. What he endured, ſuffered, underwent in that ſtate and condition, is in ſome meaſure known unto us all: All this could not be merely and firſtly for himſelf. All that he expected at the cloſe of it, was *to be glorified with that glory which he had with the Father before the world was*, John xvii. 5. It muſt then be for our ſakes; and for what? To ſave and deliver us from that condition of wrath at preſent, and future expectation of vengeance, which we had caſt ourſelves into by ſin; that is, to procure for us the forgiveneſs of ſin. Had not God deſigned pardon for ſin, he would never have ſent his Son in this manner, to teſtify it: And he did it, becauſe it could no other way be brought about, as hath been declared. Do we doubt whether there be forgiveneſs with God or no? Or whether we ſhall obtain it, if we addreſs ourſelves unto him for to be made partakers of it? Conſider the condition of his Son in the world; review his afflictions, poverty, temptations, ſorrows, ſufferings; then aſk our ſouls, To what end was all this? And if we can find any other deſign in it, any other reaſon, cauſe, or neceſſity of it, but only and merely to teſtify and declare, that there is forgiveneſs with God, and to purchaſe and procure the communication of it unto us, let us abide in, and periſh under our fears. But if this be ſo, we have ſufficient warranty to aſſure our ſouls in the expectation of it.

Fourthly, Beſides all this, there enſues upon what went before, that great and wonderful iſſue, in the death of the Son of God. This thing was great and marvellous, and we may a little enquire into what it was that was deſigned therein. And hereof the ſcripture gives us a full account. As,

1. That he died to make atonement for ſin, or reconciliation for iniquity, Dan. ix. 24. He gave his life a ranſom for the ſins of many, Matth. xx. 28. Tim. ii. 6. He

6. He was in it made ſin, that others might become the righteouſneſs of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 20. Rom. viii 3. Therein he bare our *ſins in his own body on the tree*, 1 Pet. ii. 24. This was the ſtate of this matter. Notwithſtanding all the love, grace, and condeſcenſion before mentioned, yet our ſins were of that nature, and ſo directly oppoſite unto the juſtice and holineſs of God, that unleſs atonement were made, and a price of redemption paid, there could be no pardon, no forgiveneſs obtained. This therefore he undertook to do, and that by the ſacrifice of himſelf; anſwering all that was prefigured by, and repreſented in, the ſacrifices of old; as the apoſtle largely declares, Heb. x. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. And herein is the forgiveneſs that is in God copied out and examplified ſo clearly and evidently, that he that cannot read it, will be curſed unto eternity: Yea, and let him be accurſed; for what can be more required to juſtify God in his eternal deſtruction; He that will not believe his grace, as teſtified and examplified in the blood of his Son, let him periſh without remedy. Yea, but,

2. The curſe and ſentence of the law lies on record againſt ſinners: It puts in its demands againſt our acquittance, and lays an obligation upon us unto puniſhment; and God will not reject nor deſtroy his law; unleſs it be anſwered, there is no acceptance for ſinners. This therefore, in the next place, his death was deſigned unto: As he ſatisfied and made atonement by it unto juſtice (that was the fountain: ſpring and cauſe of the law) ſo he fulfilled and anſwered the demands of the law, as it was an effect of the juſtice of God: So Rom. viii. 13. He ſuffered in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, that the righteouſneſs of the law might be fulfilled and anſwered. He anſwered the curſe of the law, when he was *made a curſe for us*, Gal. iii. 13. And ſo became, as to the obedience of the law, *the end of the law for righteouſneſs unto them that do believe*, Rom. x. 3, 4. And as to the penalty threatned, he bore it, removed it, and took it out of the way. So hath he made way

way for forgiveneſs through the very heart of the law; it hath not one word to ſpeak againſt the pardon of them that do believe. But.

3. Sinners are under the power of Satan; he lays a claim unto them, and by that means ſhall they be reſcued from his intereſt and dominion? This alſo his death was deſigned to accompliſh: For, as he was *manifeſt to deſtroy the works of the devil*, 1 John iii. 18. by *death he deſtroyed him that had the power of death*, Heb. ii. 4. that is, to deſpoil him of his power, to deſtroy him of his dominion, to take away his plea unto ſinners that believe; as we have at large elſewhere declared.

And by all theſe things, with many other concernments of his death that might be inſtanced in, we are abundantly ſecured of the forgiveneſs that is with God, and of his willingneſs that we ſhould be made partakers thereof.

Fifthly, Is this all? did his work ceaſe in his death? did he no more for the ſecuring of the forgiveneſs of ſins unto us, but only that he died for them? Yes, he lives alſo after death for the ſame end and purpoſe. This Son of God, in that nature which he aſſumed to expiate ſin by death, lives again after death, to ſecure unto us and to compleat the forgiveneſs of ſins. And this he doth two ways;

1. Being raiſed from that death which he underwent, to make atonement for ſin by the power and good-will of God, he evidenceth and teſtifieth unto us, that he hath fully performed the work he undertook; and that in our behalf, and for us, he hath received a diſcharge. Had he not anſwered the guilt of ſin by his death, he had never been raiſed from it,

2. He lives after death, a mediatory life, to make interceſſion for us, that we may receive the forgiveneſs of ſin, as alſo himſelf to give it unto us; which things are frequently made uſe of, to encourage the ſouls of men to believe, and therefore ſhall not at preſent be further inſiſted on.

Thus then ſtands this matter, that mercy might have

a way to exerciſe itſelf in forgiveneſs, with a conſiſtency unto the honour of the righteouſneſs and law of God, was the Son of God ſo ſent for the ends and purpoſes mentioned. Now, herein conſiſteth the greateſt work that God did ever perform, or ever will. It was the moſt eminent product of infinite wiſdom, goodneſs, grace and power. And herein do all the excellencies of God ſhine forth more gloriouſly than in all the works of his hands. Let us then wiſely ponder and conſider this matter; let us bring our own ſouls, with their objections, unto this evidence, and ſee what exception we have to lay againſt it. I know nothing will ſatisfy unbelief; the deſign of it is, to make the ſoul find that to be ſo hereafter, which it would perſwade it of here; namely, that there is no forgiveneſs in God, And Satan, who makes uſe of this engine, knows full well, that there is none for them who believe there is none; or rather, will not believe that there is any. For it will be at the laſt day, unto men according unto their faith or unbelief. He that believeth aright, and he that believeth not, that forgiveneſs is with God, as to their own particulars, ſhall neither of them be deceived. But what is it that can be reaſonably excepted againſt this evidence, this foundation of our faith in this matter? God hath ſent his Son in vain, which yet he muſt have done as we have ſhewed, had he not deſigned to manifeſt and exerciſe forgiveneſs towards ſinners. Wherefore, to confirm our faith from hence, let us make a little ſearch into theſe things, in ſome particular enquiries.

1. Seeing the Son of God died in that way and manner that he did, according to the determinate counſel and will of God, wherefore did he do ſo, and what aimed he at therein?

Anſw. It is plain that he died for our ſins, Rom. iv. 25. that is, to make reconciliation for the ſins of his people, Heb. ii. 17, 18. This Moſes and the prophets, this the whole ſcripture teſtifieth unto; and without a ſuppoſal of it, not one word of it can be aright believed:

ed: Nor can we yield any due obedience unto God without it.

3. What then did God do unto him? What was in tranſaction between God as the Judge of all, and him that was the Mediator of the Church?

Anſw. God indeed *laid on him the iniquities of us all,* Iſa. liii. 6. all the ſins of all the elect; yea, he made him *a curſe for us,* Gal. iii. 13. And making him a ſin-offering, or an *offering for ſin, he condemned ſin in the fleſh,* Rom. viii. 3. 2 Cor. v. 21. So that, all which the juſtice or law of God had to require about the puniſhment due unto ſin, was all laid and executed on him.

3. What then did Chriſt do in his death? What did he aim at and deſign? What was his intention in ſubmitting unto, and undergoing the will of God in theſe things?

Anſw. He bare our ſins in his own body upon the tree, 1 Pet. ii. 24. He took our ſins upon him, undertook to anſwer for them, to pay our debts, to make an end of the difference about them, between God and ſinners, Dan. ix. 24. His aim undoubtedly was, by all that he underwent and ſuffered, ſo to make atonement for ſin, as that no more could on that account be expected.

4. Had God any more to require of ſinners on the account of ſin, that his juſtice might be ſatisfied, his holineſs vindicated, his glory exalted, his honour be repaired, than what he charged on Chriſt? Did he lay ſomewhat of the penalty due to ſin on him, execute ſome part of the curſe of the law againſt him, and yet reſerve ſome wrath for ſinners themſelves?

Anſw. No, doubtleſs: He came to do the whole will of God, Heb. x. 7, 8. And God ſpared him not any thing that in his holy will he had appointed to be done unto ſin, Rom. viii. 32. He would never have ſo dealt with his Son, to have made an half work of it; nor is the work of making ſatisfaction for ſin ſuch, as that any the leaſt part of it ſhould ever be undertaken by another. Nothing is more injurious, or blaſphemous againſt God and Chriſt, than the fooliſh imagina-

tion among the papiſts of works ſatisfactory for the puniſhment due to ſin, or any part of it: As alſo is their purgatory pains to expiate any remaining guilt after this life. This work of making ſatisfaction for ſin is ſuch, as no creature in heaven or earth can put forth an hand unto. It was wholly committed to the Son of God, who alone was able to undertake it, and who hath perfectly accompliſhed it. So that God now ſays, *Fury is not in me;* he that will lay hold on my ſtrength, that he may have peace, he ſhall have peace, Iſa. xxi. 4.

5. What then became of the Lord Chriſt in his undertaking? Did he go through with it? or did he faint under it? Did he only teſtify his love, and ſhew his good will for our deliverance? Or did he alſo effectually purſue it, and not faint till he had made a way for the exerciſe of forgiveneſs?

Anſw. It was not poſſible that he ſhould be detained by the pains of death, Acts ii. 24. He knew before hand, that he ſhould be carried through his work, that he ſhould not be forſaken in it, nor faint under it, Iſa. l. 6, 7, 8. And God hath given this unqueſtionable evidence of his diſcharge of the debt of ſin to the utmoſt, in that he was acquitted from the whole account, when he was raiſed from the dead. For he that is given up to priſon upon the ſentence of the law for the debt of ſin, ſhall not be freed, until he have paid the outmoſt farthing. This therefore he manifeſted himſelf to have done, by his reſurrection from the dead.

6. What then is now become of him? Where is he, and what doth he? Hath he ſo done his work, and laid it aſide, or doth he ſtill continue to carry it on until it be brought unto its perfection?

Anſw. It is true, he was dead, but he is alive, and lives for ever: and hath told us, that becauſe he liveth we ſhall live alſo; and that, becauſe this is the end of his mediatory life in heaven, He lives for *ever to make interceſſion for us*, Heb. vii, 25. And to this end, that the forgiveneſs of ſin which he hath procured for us, may

may be communicated unto us, that we might be made partakers of it, and live for ever.

What ground is left of queſtioning the truth in hand? What link of this chain can unbelief break in, or upon? If men reſolve, notwithſtanding all this evidence and aſſurance that is tendered unto them thereof, that they will not yet believe that there is forgiveneſs with God, or will not be encouraged to attempt the ſecurity of it unto themſelves, or elſe deſpiſe it as a thing not worth the looking after; it is enough for them that declare it, that preach theſe things, that they are a ſweet ſavour unto God in them that periſh, as well as in them that are ſaved. And I bleſs God that I have had this opportunity to bear teſtimony to the grace of God in Chriſt, which if it be not received, it is becauſe *the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of men, that the light of the goſpel of the glory of God ſhould not ſhine into their minds,* But Chriſt will be glorified in them that believe on theſe principles and foundations.

XIII. Another evidence of the ſame truth may be taken from hence, that God requires forgiveneſs in us, that we ſhould forgive one another; and therefore doubtleſs there is forgiveneſs with him for us. The ſenſe of this conſideration unto our preſent purpoſe will be manifeſt in the enſuing obſervations.

Firſt, It is certain, that God hath required this of us: The teſtimonies hereof are many, and known, ſo that they need not particularly to be repeated or inſiſted on. See Luke xvii, 3, 4. Eph. iv. 32. Matt. xviii. 24. unto the end. Only, there are ſome things that put a ſingular emphaſis upon this command, manifeſting the great importance of this duty in us, which may be marked. As,

1ſt, That our Saviour requires us to carry a ſenſe of our integrity and ſincerity in the diſcharge of this duty, along with us in our addreſſes unto God in prayer. Hence he teacheth and enjoins us to pray, or plead for

for the forgiveneſs of our debts to God, (that is, our ſins or treſpaſſes againſt him, which make us debtors to his law and juſtice) even as we forgive them that ſo treſpaſs or offend againſt us, as to ſtand in need of our forgiveneſs, Matth. vi. 12. Many are ready to devour ſuch as are not ſatisfied, that the words of that rule of prayer, which he hath preſcribed unto us, are to be preciſely read or repeated every day; I wiſh they would as heedfully mind that preſcription which is given us herein, for that frame of heart and ſpirit which ought to be in all our ſupplications; it might poſſibly abate of their wrath in that and other things. But here is a rule for all prayer, as all acknowledge; as alſo of the things that are requiſite to make it acceptable. This in particular is required, that before the ſearcher of all hearts, and in our addreſſes unto him, in our greateſt concernments, we profeſs our ſincerity in the diſcharge of this duty, and do put our obtaining of what we deſire upon that iſſue. This is a great crown that is put upon the head of this duty, that which makes it very eminent, and evidenceth the great concern of the glory of God, and our own ſouls therein.

2*dly*, We may obſerve, that no other duty whatever is expreſly placed in the ſame ſeries, order, or rank with it; which makes it evident, that it is ſingled out to be profeſſed as a token and pledge of our ſincerity in all other parts of our obedience unto God. It is by Chriſt himſelf made the inſtance, for the trial of our ſincerity in our univerſal obedience, which gives no ſmall honour unto it. The apoſtle puts great weight on the fifth commandment, *Honour thy father and mother*, becauſe it is the *firſt commandment with promiſe*, Eph. vi. 2. All the commandments indeed had a promiſe: *Do this and live;* life was promiſed to the obſervance of them all: But this is the firſt that had a peculiar promiſe annexed unto it, and accompanying of it. And it was ſuch a promiſe, as had a peculiar foundation through God's ordinance in the thing itſelf. It is, that the parents ſhould prolong the lives of their children

that

that were obedient, Exod. xx. 11. (Heb.) *They ſhall prolong thy days:* that is, by praying for their proſperity, bleſſing them in the name of God, and directing them in thoſe ways of obedience, whereby they might live and poſſeſs the land; and this promiſe is now tranſlated from the covenant of Canaan, into the covenant of grace. The bleſſing of parents going far towards the intereſting their children in the promiſe thereof, and ſo prolonging their days unto eternity, though their days in this world ſhould be of little continuance. So it is ſaid of our Saviour, that he *ſhould ſee his ſeed, and prolong his days*, Iſa. liii. 10. Which hath carried over that word, and that which is ſignified by it, unto eternal things: But this by the way. As the ſingular promiſe made to that command renders it ſingular; ſo doth this eſpecial inſtancing in this duty in our prayer render it alſo: For though, as all the commandments had a promiſe, ſo we are to carry a teſtimony with us of our ſincerity in univerſal obedience in our addreſſes unto God; yet the ſingling out of this inſtance renders it exceeding remarkable, and ſhews what a value God puts upon it, and how well he is pleaſed with it.

3*dly*, That God requires this forgiveneſs in us, upon the account of the forgiveneſs we receive from him; which is to put the greateſt obligation upon us unto it, that we are capable of; and to give the ſtrongeſt and moſt powerful motive poſſible unto its performance: See Eph. iv. 32.

4*thly*, That this duty is more directly and expreſly required in the New Teſtament than in the old. Required then it was, but not ſo openly, ſo plainly, ſo expreſly as now. Hence we find a different frame of ſpirit between them under that diſpenſation, and thoſe under that of the New Teſtament. There are found amongſt them ſome ſuch reflections upon their enemies, their oppreſſors, perſecutors, and the like; as although they are warranted by ſome actings of the Spirit of God in them, yet being ſuited unto the diſpenſation they were under, do no way become us now, who by Jeſus Chriſt

Chriſt receive grace for grace. So Zechariah when he died, cried, *The Lord look on it, and require it;* but Stephen dying in the ſame cauſe and manner ſaid, *Lord lay not this ſin to their charge.* Elijah called for fire from heaven; but our Saviour reproves the leaſt inclination in his diſciples to imitate him therein: And the reaſon of this difference is, becauſe forgiveneſs in God is under the New Teſtament far more clearly, eſpecially in the nature in cauſe of it, diſcovered in the goſpel, which hath brought life and immortality to light, than it was under the law. For all our obedience, both in matter and manner, is to be ſuited unto the diſcoveries and revelation of God unto us.

5thly This forgiveneſs of others, is made an expreſs condition of our obtaining pardon and forgiveneſs from God, Matth. vi. 14, 15. And the nature hereof is expreſly declared, chap. xviii. 24. Such evangelical conditions we have not many. I confeſs they have no cauſal influence into the accompliſhment of the promiſe; but the non-performance of them is a ſufficient bar againſt our pretending to the promiſe, a ſufficient evidence that we have no pleadable intereſt in it. Our forgiving of others will not procure forgiveneſs for ourſelves; but our not forgiving of others proves, that we ourſelves are not forgiven. And all theſe things do ſhew what weight God himſelf lays on this duty.

Secondly, Obſerve, that this duty is ſuch, as that there is nothing more comely, uſeful, or honourable unto, or praiſe-worthy in any, than a due performance of it. To be moroſe, implacable, inexorable, revengeful, is one of the greateſt degeneracies of human nature. And no men are commonly, even in this world, more branded with real infamy, and diſhonour amongſt wiſe and good men, than thoſe who are of ſuch a frame, and do act accordingly. To remember injuries, to retain a ſenſe of wrongs, to watch for opportunities of revenge, to hate and be maliciouſly perverſe, is to repreſent the image of the devil unto the world in its proper colours; he is the great enemy and ſelf-avenger. On the other ſide,

no

no grace, no vertue, no duty, no ornament of the mind, or converſation of man, is in itſelf ſo lovely, ſo comely, ſo praiſe-worthy, or ſo uſeful unto mankind, as are meekneſs, readineſs to forgive and pardon. This is that principally which renders a man a good man, for whom one would even dare to die: And I am ſorry to add, that this grace or duty is recommended by its rarity. It is little found amongſt the children of men. The conſideration of the defect of men herein, as in thoſe other fundamental duties of the goſpel, in ſelf-denial, readineſs for the croſs, and forſaking the world, is an evidence, if not how little ſincerity there is in the world, yet at leaſt it is, of how little growing and thriving there is amongſt profeſſors.

Thirdly, That there is no grace, vertue, or perfection in any man, but what is as an emanation from the divine goodneſs and bounty, ſo expreſſive of ſome divine excellencies or perfection; ſomewhat that is in God, in a way and manner infinitely more excellent. We were created in the image of God. Whatever was good or comely in us, was a part of that image; eſpecially the ornaments of our minds, the perfections of our ſouls. Theſe things had in them a reſemblance of, and a correſpondency unto ſome excellencies in God, whereunto by the way of analogy they may be reduced. This being for the moſt part loſt by ſin, a ſhadow of it only remaining in the faculties of our ſouls; and that dominion over the creatures, which is permitted unto men in the patience of God. The recovery that we have by grace, is nothing but an initial renovation of the image of God in us, Eph. iv. 22. It is the implanting upon our natures thoſe graces, which may render us again like unto him, And nothing is grace or vertue, but what ſo anſwers to ſomewhat in God. So then, whatever is in us, of this kind, is in God abſolutely, perfectly, in a way and manner infinitely more excellent.

Let us now therefore put theſe things together. God requires of us, that there ſhould be forgiveneſs in us

for thoſe that do offend us; forgiveneſs without limitation and bounds; the grace hereof he beſtoweth on his ſaints; ſets an high price upon it, and manifeſts many ways, that he accounts it among the moſt excellent of our endowments; one of the moſt lovely and praiſeworthy qualifications of any perſon. What then ſhall we now ſay? Is there forgiveneſs with him or no? *He that made the eye, ſhall he not ſee? He that planted the ear, ſhall he not hear?* He that thus preſcribes forgiveneſs to us, that beſtows the grace of it upon us, is there not forgiveneſs with him? It is all one as to ſay, tho' we are good, yet God is not; though we are benign and bountiful, yet he is not. He that finds this grace wrought in him in any meaſure, and yet fears that he ſhall not find it in God for himſelf, doth therein, and ſo far prefer himſelf above God; which is the natural effect of curſed unbelief.

But the truth is, were there not forgiveneſs with God, forgiveneſs in man would be no vertue, with all thoſe qualities that incline thereto; ſuch are meekneſs, pity, patience, compaſſion, and the like. Which what were it, but to ſet looſe human nature to rage and madneſs? For, as every truth conſiſts in its anſwerableneſs to the prime and eternal verity, ſo vertue conſiſts not abſolutely nor primarily in a conformity to a rule of command, but in a correſpondency unto the firſt abſolute perfect Being, and its perfections.

Properties of forgiveneſs.----The greatneſs and freedom of it

The arguments and demonſtrations foregoing, have, we hope, undeniably evinced the great truth we have inſiſted on, which is the life and ſoul of all our hope, profeſſion, religion and worſhip. The end of all this diſcourſe is, to lay a firm foundation for faith to reſt upon, in its addreſſes unto God for the forgiveneſs of ſins; as alſo, to give encouragement unto all ſorts of perſons ſo to do. This end remains now to be explained

ed and preſſed; which work, yet before we directly cloſe withal, two things are further to be premiſed. And the firſt is, to propoſe ſome of thoſe adjuncts of, and conſiderations about this forgiveneſs, as may both encourage and neceſſitate us to ſeek out after it, and to mix the teſtimonies given unto it, and the promiſes of it, with faith, unto our benefit and advantage. The other is to ſhew, how needful all this endeavour is, upon the account of that great unbelief which is in the moſt in this matter. As to the firſt of theſe then, we may conſider;

Firſt, That this forgiveneſs that is with God, is ſuch as becomes him, ſuch as is ſuitable to his greatneſs, goodneſs, and all other excellencies of his nature; ſuch as that therein he will be known to be God. What he ſays concerning ſome of the works of his providence, *Be ſtill and know that I am God;* may be much more ſaid concerning this great effect of his grace: Still your ſouls, and know that he is God. It is not like that narrow, difficult, halving and manacled forgiveneſs that is found amongſt men, when any ſuch thing is found amongſt them. But it is full, free, boundleſs, bottomleſs, abſolute, ſuch as becomes his nature and excellencies. It is, in a word, forgiveneſs that is with God, and by the exerciſe whereof he will be known ſo to be. And hence,

1. God himſelf doth really ſeparate and diſtinguiſh his forgiveneſs, from any thing that our thoughts and imaginations can reach unto, and that becauſe it is his and like himſelf. It is an object for faith alone, which can reſt in that, which it cannot apprehend. It is never ſafer, than when it is, as it were, overwhelmed with infiniteneſs. But ſet mere rational thoughts, or the imaginations of our minds at work about ſuch things, and they fall inconceivably ſhort of them. They can neither conceive of them aright, nor uſe them unto their proper end and purpoſe. Were not forgiveneſs in God ſomewhat beyond what men could imagine, no fleſh, could be ſaved. This himſelf expreſſeth, Iſa. lv. 7, 8, 9.

Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts neither are your ways my ways, ſaith the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, ſo are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. They are, as is plain in the context, thoughts of forgiveneſs, and ways of pardon whereof he ſpeaks. Theſe our apprehenſions come ſhort of; we know little or nothing of the infinite largeneſs of his heart in this matter. He that he ſpeaks of, is (Heb.) an impiouſly wicked man, and (Heb.) *a man of deceit*, and perverſe wickedneſs. He whoſe deſign and courſe is nothing but a lie, ſin and iniquity; ſuch an one as we would have little or no hopes of; that we would ſcarce think it worth our while to deal withal about a hopeleſs converſion; or can ſcarce find it in our hearts to pray for him, but are ready to give him up, as one profligate and deſperate. But let him return unto the Lord, and he ſhall obtain forgiveneſs. But how can this be? Is it poſſible there ſhould be mercy for ſuch an one? Yes! For the Lord (Heb.) *will multiply to pardon.* He hath forgiveneſs with him, to out do all the multiplied ſins of any that return unto him, and ſeek for it. But this is very hard, very difficult for us to apprehend. This is not the way and manner of men: We deal not thus with profligate offenders againſt us. True ſaith God; *But your ways are not my ways:* I do not act in this matter like unto you, nor as you are accuſtomed to do. How then ſhall we apprehend it; how ſhall we conceive of it; You can never do it by your reaſon or imaginations; *For as the heavens is above the earth, ſo are my thoughts*, in this matter, *above your thoughts.* This is an expreſſion to ſet out the largeſt and moſt unconceivable diſtance that may be. The creation will afford no more ſignificant expreſſion or repreſentation of it. The heavens are inconceivably diſtant from the earth, and inconceivably glorious above it. So are the thoughts of

of God; they are not only diſtant from ours, but have a glory in them alſo that we cannot riſe up unto. For the moſt part, when we come to deal with God about forgiveneſs, we hang in every briar of diſputing quarrelſome unbelief. This or that circumſtance of aggravation, this or that unparallel'd particular, bereaves us of our confidence. Want of a due conſideration of him with whom we have to do, meaſuring him by that line of our own imaginations, bringing him down unto our thoughts and ways, is the cauſe of all our diſquietments. Becauſe we find it hard to forgive our pence, we think he cannot forgive talents. But he hath provided to obviate ſuch thoughts in us, Hoſ. xi. 9. *I will not execute the fierceneſs of my wrath, I will not return to deſtroy Ephraim, for* I AM GOD, AND NOT MAN. Our ſatisfaction in this matter, is to be taken from his nature; were he a man, or as the ſons of men, it were impoſſible that upon ſuch, and ſo many provocations, he ſhould turn away from the fierceneſs of his anger. But he is God: This gives an infiniteneſs, and an unconceivable boundleſneſs to the forgiveneſs that is with him; and exalts it above all our thoughts and ways. This is to be lamented; preſumption, which turns God unto an idol, aſcribes unto that idol a greater largeneſs in forgiveneſs, than faith is able to raiſe up unto, when it deals with him as a God of infinite excellencies and perfections. The reaſons of it I confeſs are obvious. But this is certain, no preſumption can falſly imagine that forgiveneſs to itſelf from the idol of its heart, as faith may, in the way of God, find in him, and obtain from him. For,

2. God engageth his infinite excellencies to demonſtrate the greatneſs and boundleſneſs of his forgiveneſs. He propoſeth them unto our conſiderations, to convince us, that we ſhall find pardon with him ſuitable and anſwerable unto them. See Iſa. xl. 27, 28, 30, 31. *Why ſayeſt thou, O Jacob, and ſpeakeſt, O Iſrael, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is paſſed over from my God? Haſt thou not known, haſt thou not heard, that*

that the everlaſting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no ſearching of his underſtanding; He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he encreaſeth ſtrength: Even the youths ſhall faint and be weary, and the young men ſhall utterly fail; but they that wait upon the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength, they ſhall mount up with wings as eagles, they ſhall run and not be weary, walk and not be faint. The matter in queſtion is, whether acceptance with God, which is only by forgiveneſs, is to be obtained or no; this ſinful Jacob either deſpairs of, or at leaſt deſponds about. But ſaith God, *My thoughts are not as your thoughts* in this matter. And what courſe doth he take to convince them of their miſtake therein? What argument doth he make uſe of to free them from their unbelief, and to rebuke their fears? Plainly he calls them to the conſideration of himſelf, both who and what he is, with whom they had to do: That they might expect acceptance and forgiveneſs, ſuch as did become him. Minding them of his power, his immenſity, his infinite wiſdom, his unchangeableneſs, all the excellencies and properties of his nature, he demands of them, whether they have not juſt ground to expect forgiveneſs and grace, above all their thoughts and apprehenſions, becauſe anſwering the infinite largeneſs of his heart from whence it doth proceed?

And Moſes manageth this plea for the forgiveneſs of that people under an high provocation, and a moſt ſevere threatning of their deſtruction thereon, Numb. xiv. 17, 18. He pleads for pardon in ſuch a way and manner, as may anſwer the great and glorious properties of the nature of God, and which would manifeſt an infiniteneſs of his power and all ſufficiency to be in him.

This I ſay, is an encouragement in general unto believers. We have, as I hope, upon unqueſtionable grounds evidenced, that there is forgiveneſs with God, which is the hinge on which turneth the iſſue of our e-

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ternal condition. Now, this is like himſelf, ſuch as becomes him; that anſwers the infinite perfections of his nature; that is exerciſed and given forth by him as God. We are apt to narrow and ſtraiten it by our unbelief, and to render it unbecoming of him. He leſs diſhonours God (or as little) who being wholly under the power of the law, believes that there is no forgiveneſs with him, none to be obtained from him, or doth not believe it, that ſo it is, or is ſo to be obtained, for which he hath the voice and ſentence of the law to countenance him, than thoſe who being convinced of the principles and grounds of it before mentioned, and of the truth of the teſtimony given unto it, do yet by ſtraitning and narrowing of it, render it unworthy of him, whoſe excellencies are all infinite, and whoſe ways on that account are incomprehenſible. If then we reſolve to treat with God about this matter, which is the buſineſs now in hand, let us do it, as it becomes his greatneſs, that is indeed, as the wants of our ſouls require; let us not intangle our own ſpirits, by limiting his grace. The father of the child poſſeſſed with a devil, being in a great agony when he came to our Saviour, cries out, *If thou canſt do any thing, have compaſſion on us, and help us*, Mark ix. 22. He would fain be delivered, but the matter was ſo great, that he queſtioned whether the Lord Chriſt had either compaſſion, or power enough for his relief. And what did he obtain hereby? Nothing, but the retarding of the cure of his child for a ſeaſon: For our Saviour holds him off, untill he had inſtructed him in this matter; ſaith he, ver. 23. *If thou canſt believe, all things are poſſible unto him that believeth.* Miſtake not, if thy child be not cured, it is not for want of power or pity in me, but of faith in thee. My power is ſuch, as renders all things poſſible, ſo that they be believed. So it is with many, who would deſirouſly be made partakers of forgiveneſs: If it be poſſible, they would be pardoned, but they do not ſee it poſſible. Why, where is the defect? God hath no pardon for them, or ſuch as they

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are, and ſo it may be they come finally ſhort of pardon. What, becauſe God cannot pardon them, it is not poſſible with him! Not at all; but becauſe they cannot, they will not believe, that the forgiveneſs that is, with him is ſuch, as that it would anſwer all the wants of their ſouls, becauſe it anſwers the infinite largeneſs of his heart. And if this doth not wholly deprive them of pardon, yet it greatly retards their peace and comfort. God doth not take it well to be limited by us in any thing, leaſt of all in his grace. This he calls a tempting of him, a provoking temptation, Pſal. lxxviii. 41. *They turned back and tempted God, they limited the Holy One of Iſrael.* This he could not bear with. If there be any pardon with God, it is ſuch as becomes him to give: When he pardons he will abundantly pardon. Go with your half forgiveneſs, limited, conditional pardons, with reſerves and limitations, unto the ſons of men; it may be, it may become them, it is like themſelves; that of God is abſolute and perfect, before which our ſins are as a cloud before the eaſt wind, and the riſing ſun. Hence he is ſaid to do this work with his whole heart and his whole ſoul; χαρίζεσθαι, freely, bountifully, largely to indulge and forgive unto us our ſins; and to caſt them into the bottom of the ſea, Micah vii. 19. into the bottomleſs ocean, an emblem of infinite mercy. Remember this, poor ſouls, when you are to deal with God in this matter, all things are poſſible unto them that believe.

Secondly, This forgiveneſs is in or with God, not only ſo, as that we may apply ourſelves unto it if we will, for which he will not be offended with us, but ſo alſo as that he hath placed his great glory in the declaration and communication of it; nor can we honour him more, than by coming to him to be made partakers of it, and ſo to receive it from him. For the moſt part, we are as it were ready rather to ſteal forgiveneſs from God than to receive from him, as one that gives it freely and largely. We take it up, and lay it down, as though we would be glad to have it; ſo God did not, as it were

were, ſee us take it; for we are afraid he is not willing we ſhould have it indeed. We would ſteal this fire from heaven, and have a ſhare in God's treaſure and riches, almoſt without his conſent: At leaſt we think that we have it from him *ægre*, with much difficulty, that it is rarely given, and ſcarcely obtained. That he gives it out, ἑκοντ' ἀέκοντίσι θύμῳ, with a kind of unwilling willingneſs; as we ſometimes give alms without chearfulneſs: And that he loſeth ſo much by us, as he giveth out in pardon. We are apt to think, that we are very willing to have forgiveneſs, but that God is unwilling to beſtow it, and that becauſe he ſeems to be a loſer by it, and to forgoe the glory of inflicting puniſhment for our ſins, which of all things we ſuppoſe he is moſt loth to part withal. And this is the very nature of unbelief. But indeed things are quite otherwiſe. He hath, in this matter, through the Lord Chriſt, ordered all things, in his dealings with ſinners, to the *praiſe of the glory of his grace*, Eph. i. 6. His deſign in the whole myſtery of the goſpel, is to make his grace glorious, or to exalt pardoning mercy. The great fruit and product of his grace is forgiveneſs; the forgiveneſs of ſinners. This God will render himſelf glorious in and by. All the praiſe, glory and worſhip, that he deſigns from any in this world, is to redound unto him by the way of this grace, as we have proved at large before. For this cauſe ſpared he the world, when ſin firſt entered into it; for this cauſe did he provide a new covenant, when the old was become unprofitable; for this cauſe did he ſend his Son into the world. This hath he teſtified by all the evidences inſiſted on. Would he have loſt the praiſe of his grace, nothing hereof would have been done or brought about. We can then no way ſo eminently bring or aſcribe glory unto God, as by our receiving forgiveneſs from him; he being willing thereunto, upon the account of its tendency unto his own glory, in that way, which he hath peculiarly fixed on for its manifeſtation. Hence the apoſtle exhorts us to come *boldly to the throne of grace*,

Heb. iv. 16. That is, with the confidence of faith, as he expounds boldneſs, chap. x. 19, 20. We come about a buſineſs wherewith he is well pleaſed; ſuch as he delights in the doing of, as he expreſſeth himſelf, Zeph. iii. 17. *The Lord thy God, in the midſt of thee, is mighty; he will ſave, he will rejoice over thee with joy. He will reſt in his love, he will joy over thee with ſinging.* This is the way of God's pardoning; he doth it in a rejoicing triumphant manner, ſatisfying abundantly his own holy ſoul therein, and reſting in his love. We have then abundant encouragement to draw nigh to the throne of grace, to be made partakers of what God is ſo willing to give out unto us. And to this end ſerves alſo the oath of God before inſiſted on, namely, to root out all the ſecret reſerves of unbelief, concerning God's unwillingneſs to give mercy, grace and pardon unto ſinners, See Heb. vi. 17, 18. where is it expreſſed. Therefore the tendency of our former arguments, is not merely to prove that there is forgiveneſs with God, which we may believe and not be miſtaken, but which we ought to believe: It is our duty ſo to do. We think it our duty to pray, to hear the word, to give alms, to love the brethren, and to abſtain from ſin; and if we fail in any of theſe, we find the guilt of them reflected upon our conſcience unto our diſquietment; but we ſcarce think it our duty to believe the forgiveneſs of our ſins. It is well it may be, we think, with them that can do it, but we think it not their fault who do not. Such perſons may be pitied, but, as we ſuppoſe, not juſtly blamed, no not by God himſelf. Whoſe conſcience almoſt is burdened with this as a ſin, that he doth not, as he ought, believe the forgiveneſs of his ſins? And this is merely becauſe men judge it not their duty ſo to do. For a non-performance of a duty apprehended to be ſuch, will reflect on the conſcience a ſenſe of the guilt of ſin. But now, what can be required to make any thing a duty unto us, that is wanting in this matter? For,

1. There is forgiveneſs with God, and this manifeſted

ed, revealed, declared. This manifeſtation of it is that which makes it the object of our faith. We believe things to be in God, and with him, not merely and formally, becauſe they are ſo, but becauſe he hath manifeſted and revealed them ſo to be, 1 John i. 2. What he ſo declares, it is our duty to believe, or we fruſtrate the end of his revelation.

2. We are expreſly commanded to believe, and that upon the higheſt promiſes, and under the greateſt penalties. This command is that which makes believing formally a duty. Faith is a grace, as it is freely wrought in us by the Holy Ghoſt, the root of all obedience and duties, as it is radically fixed in the heart; but as it is commanded, it is *a duty;* and theſe commands, you know, are ſeveral ways expreſſed, by invitations, exhortations, propoſitions, which all have in them the nature of commands; which take up a great part of the books of the new teſtament.

3. It is a duty, as we have ſhewed, of the greateſt concernment unto the glory of God.

4. Of the greateſt importance unto our ſouls, here and hereafter. And theſe things were neceſſary to be added, to bottom our enſuing exhortations upon.

Evidences that moſt men do not believe forgiveneſs.

That which ſhould now enſue, is the peculiar improvement of this truth all along aimed at; namely, to give exhortations, and encouragements unto believing. But I can take few ſteps in this work, wherein methinks I do hear ſome ſaying. Surely all this is needleſs; who is there that doth not believe all that you go about to prove? And ſo theſe pains are ſpent to little or no purpoſe. I ſhall therefore, before I perſwade any unto it, endeavour to ſhew that they do it not already. Many I ſay, the moſt of men who live under the diſpenſation of the goſpel, do woefully deceive their own ſouls in this matter. They do not believe what they profeſs themſelves to believe, and what they think they

believe. Men talk of fundamental errors; this is to me the moſt fundamental error that any can fall into, and the moſt pernicious. It is made up of theſe two parts. (1.) They do not indeed believe forgiveneſs. (2.) They ſuppoſe they do believe it, which keeps them from ſeeking after their only remedy. Both theſe miſtakes are in the foundation, and do ruin the ſouls of them that live and die in them. I ſhall then, by a brief enquiry, put this matter to a trial. By ſome plain rules and principles may this important queſtion, Whether we do indeed believe forgiveneſs or no? be anſwered and decided. But to the reſolution intended I ſhall premiſe two obſervations.

1. Men, in this caſe, are very apt to deceive themſelves. Self-love, vain hopes, liking of luſt, common falſe principles, ſloth, unwillingneſs unto ſelf-examination, reputation with the world, and it may be in the church, all vigorouſly concur unto mens ſelf-deceiving in this matter. It is no eaſy thing for a ſoul to break through all theſe, and all ſelf-reaſonings that riſe from them, to come unto a clear judgment of its own acting, in dealing with God about forgiveneſs. Men alſo find a common preſumption of this truth, and its being an eaſy relief againſt gripings of conſcience, and diſturbing thoughts about ſin, which they meet daily withal. Aiming therefore only at the removal of trouble, and finding their preſent imagination of it ſufficient thereunto, they never bring their perſwaſion to the trial.

2. As men are apt to do thus, ſo they actually do ſo, they do deceive themſelves, and know not that they do ſo. The laſt day will make this evident, if men will no ſooner be convinced of their folly. When our Saviour told his diſciples, that one of them twelve ſhould betray him; though it were but one of the twelve that was in danger, yet every one of the twelve made a particular enquiry about himſelf. I will not ſay, that one in each twelve is here miſtaken: But I am ſure the truth tells us, *That many are called, and but few are choſen;* they are but few, who do really believe forgiveneſs.

giveneſs. Is it not then incumbent on every one, to be enquiring in what number he is likely to be found at the laſt day? Whilſt men put this enquiry off from themſelves, and think or ſay, it may be the concernment of others, it is not mine, they periſh, and that without remedy. Remember what poor Jacob ſaid, when he had loſt one child, and was afraid of the loſs of another, Gen. xliii. 14. *If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.* As if he ſhould have ſaid, If I loſe my children, I have no more to loſe, they are my *all*: Nothing worſe can befal me in this world. Comfort, joy, yea, life and all go with them. How much more may men ſay in this caſe, If we are deceived here, we are deceived; all is loſt, hope, and life, and ſoul, all muſt periſh, and that for ever. There is no help or relief for them who deceive themſelves in this matter. They have found out a way to go quietly down into the pit.

Now theſe things are premiſed: Only, that they may be incentives unto ſelf-examination in this matter, and ſo render the enſuing conſiderations uſeful; let us then addreſs ourſelves unto them.

1. In general, This is a goſpel-truth; yea, the great fundamental and moſt important truth of the goſpel. It is the turning point of the two covenants, as God himſelf declares, Heb. vii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. Now, a very eaſy conſideration of the ways and walkings of men will ſatisfy us as to this enquiry, whether they do indeed believe the goſpel, the covenant of grace, and the fundamental principles of it. Certainly their ignorance, darkneſs, blindneſs, their corrupt affections, and worldly converſations, their earthly-mindedneſs, and open diſavowing of the Spirit, ways, and yoke of Chriſt, ſpeak no ſuch language. Shall we think that proud, heady, worldly, ſelf-ſeekers, haters of the people of God, and his ways, deſpiſers of the Spirit of grace, and his work, ſacrificers of their own luſts, and ſuch like, do believe the covenant of grace, or remiſſion of ſins? God forbid we ſhould entertain any one thought of ſo great diſ-

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honour to the goſpel. Wherever that is received or believed, it produceth other effects, Titus ii. 11, 12. Iſa. xi. 6, 7, 8, 9. It teacheth men to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts. It changeth their hearts, natures, and ways; it is not ſuch a barren, impotent, and fruitleſs thing, as ſuch an apprehenſion would repreſent it.

2. They that really believe forgiveneſs in God, do thereby obtain forgiveneſs. Believing gives an intereſt in it; it brings it home to the ſoul concerned. This is the inviolable law of the goſpel. Believing and forgiveneſs are inſeparably conjoined. Among the evidences that we may have of any one being intereſted in forgiveneſs, I ſhall only name one; they prize and value it above all the world. Let us enquire what eſteem and valuation many of thoſe have of forgiveneſs, who put it out of all queſtion that they do believe it. Do they look upon it as their treaſure, their jewel, their pearl of price? Are they ſolicitous about it? Do they often look and examine, whether it continues ſafe in their poſſeſſion or no? Suppoſe a man have a precious jewel, laid up in ſome place in his houſe; ſuppoſe it be unto him as the poor widows two mites, all her ſubſtance or living; will he not carefully ponder on it? Will he not frequently ſatisfy himſelf that it is ſafe? We may know that ſuch an houſe, ſuch fields or lands do not belong unto a man, when he paſſeth by them daily, and taketh little or no notice of them. Now, how do moſt men look upon forgiveneſs? What is their common deportment in reference unto it? Are their hearts continually filled with thoughts about it? Are they ſolicitous concerning their intereſt in it? Do they reckon, that whilſt that is ſafe, all is ſafe with them? When it is, as it were, laid out of the way by ſin and unbelief, do they give themſelves no reſt, until it be afreſh diſcovered unto them? Is this the frame of the moſt of men? The Lord knows it is not. They talk of forgiveneſs, but eſteem it not, prize it not, make no particular enquiries after it. They put it to an ungrounded venture, whether ever they be partakers of it or no; for

for a relief againſt ſome pangs of conſcience it is called upon, or elſe ſcarce thought of at all. Let not any ſo minded flatter themſelves that they have any acquaintance with the myſtery of goſpel-forgiveneſs.

3. Let it be enquired of them who pretend unto this perſuaſion, how they came by it, that we may know whether it be him who calleth us, or no; that we may try whether they have broken thro' the difficulties in the entertaining of it, which we have manifeſted abundantly to ly in the way of it.

When Peter confeſſed our Saviour to be the Chriſt the Son of the living God; he told him, that *fleſh and blood did not reveal that unto him, but his Father who is in heaven*, Matth. xvi. 17. It is ſo with them who indeed believe forgiveneſs in God: Fleſh and blood hath not revealed it unto them. It hath not been furthered by any thing within them, or without them, but all lies in oppoſition unto it. *This is the work of God, that we believe*, John vi. 29. A great work, the greateſt work that God requireth of us. It is not only a great thing in itſelf (the grace of believing is a great thing) but it is great in reſpect of its object, or what we have to believe, or forgiveneſs itſelf. The great honour of Abraham's faith lay in this, that deaths and difficulties lay in the way of it, Rom. iv. 18, 19, 20. But what is a dead body, and a dead womb, to an accuſing conſcience, a killing law, and apprehenſions of a God terrible as a conſuming fire? all which as was ſhewed, oppoſe themſelves unto a ſoul called to believe forgiveneſs.

What now have the moſt of men, who are confident in the profeſſion of this faith, to ſay unto this thing? Let them ſpeak clearly, and they muſt ſay, that indeed they never found the leaſt difficulty in this matter; they never doubted of it; they never queſtioned it, nor do know any reaſon why they ſhould do ſo. It is a thing which they have ſo taken for granted, as that it never coſt them an hour's labour, prayer, meditation about it. Have they had ſecret reaſonings and contendings in their

their hearts about it? No; Have they conſidered how the objections that ly againſt it may be removed; Not at all, But is it ſo indeed, that this perſuaſion is thus bred in you, you know not how? Are the corrupted natures of men, and the goſpel ſo ſuited, ſo complying? Is the new covenant grown ſo connatural to fleſh and blood? Is the greateſt ſecret that ever was revealed from the boſom of the Father, become ſo familiar and eaſy to the wiſdom of the fleſh? Is that which was folly to the wiſe Greeks, and a ſtumbling-block to the wonder-gazing Jews, become, on a ſudden, wiſdom, and a plain path to the ſame principles that were in them? But the truth of this matter is, that ſuch men have a general, uſeleſs, barren notion of pardon, which Satan, preſumption, tradition, common reports, and the cuſtomary hearing of the word, have furniſhed them withal; but for that goſpel diſcovery of forgiveneſs, whereof we have been ſpeaking, they are utterly ignorant of it, and unacquainted with it. To convince ſuch poor creatures of the folly of their preſumption, I would but deſire them to go to ſome real believers, that are or may be known unto them; let them be aſked, whether they came ſo eaſily by their faith, and apprehenſions of forgiveneſs, or no? Alas, ſaith one, theſe twenty years have I been following after God, and yet I have not arrived unto an abiding chearing perſuaſion of it. I know what it coſt me, what trials, difficulties, temptations I wreſtled with, and went thro' withal before I obtained it, ſaith another. What I have attained unto, hath been of unſpeakable mercy: And it is my daily prayer, that I may be preſerved in it; by the exceeding greatneſs of the power of God; for I continually wreſtle with ſtorms that are ready to drive me from my anchor. A little of this diſcourſe may be ſufficient to convince poor, dark, carnal creatures of the folly and vanity of their confidence.

4. There are certain means whereby the revelation and diſcovery of this myſtery is made unto the ſouls of men. By theſe they do obtain it, or they obtain it not. The

The myſtery itſelf was a ſecret, hidden in the counſel of God from eternity; nor was there any way whereby it might be revealed, but by the Son of God: And that is done in the word of the goſpel. If then you ſay you know it; let us enquire how you came ſo to do? And by what means it hath been declared unto you? Hath this been done by a word of truth? by the promiſe of the goſpel? Was it by preaching of the word unto you, or by reading of it, or meditating upon it? Or did you receive it from and by ſome ſeaſonable word, of, or from the ſcriptures ſpoken unto you? Or hath it inſenſibly gotten ground upon your hearts and minds, upon the ſtrivings and conflicts of your ſouls about ſin, from the truth wherein you had been inſtructed in general? Or by what other ways and means have you come to that acquaintance with it, whereof you boaſt? You can tell how you came by your wealth, your gold, and ſilver; you know how you became learned, or obtained the knowledge of the myſtery of your trade, who taught you in it, and how came you by it: There is not any thing wherein you are concerned, but you can anſwer theſe enquiries in reference unto it. Think it then no great matter, if you are put to anſwer this queſtion alſo; By what way or means came you to the knowledge of forgiveneſs, which you boaſt of? Was it by any of thoſe before-mentioned, or ſome other? If you cannot anſwer diſtinctly to theſe things, only you ſay you have heard it, and believed it ever ſince you can remember; ſo thoſe ſaid that went before you, ſo they ſay with whom you do converſe, you never met with any one that called it into queſtion, nor heard of any, unleſs it were one or two deſpairing wretches; it will be juſtly queſtioned, whether you have any portion in this matter or no. If uncertain rumours, reports, general notions, ly at the bottom of your perſuaſion, do not ſuppoſe that you have any communion with Chriſt therein.

5. Of them who profeſs to believe forgiveneſs, how few are there who indeed know what it is. They believe they ſay, but as the Samaritans worſhiped, they know not what. With ſome a bold preſumption, and

crying peace, peace, goes for the belief of forgiveneſs.

A general apprehenſion of impunity from God, and that tho' they are ſinners, yet they ſhall not be puniſhed, paſſeth with others at the ſame rate.

Some think they ſhall prevail with God by their prayers and deſires to let them alone, and not caſt them into hell. One way or other to eſcape the vengeance of hell, not to be puniſhed in another world, is that which men fix their minds upon.

But is this that forgiveneſs which is revealed in the goſpel? That which we have been treating about? The riſe and ſpring of our forgiveneſs is in the heart and gracious nature of God, declared by his name; Have you enquired ſeriouſly into this? Have you ſtood at the ſhore of that infinite ocean of goodneſs and love? Have your ſouls found ſupportment and relief from that conſideration? And have your hearts leaped within you with the thoughts of it? Or, if you have never been affected in an eſpecial manner herewithal, have you bowed down your ſouls under the conſiderations of that ſovereign act of the will of God, that is the next ſpring of forgiveneſs; that glorious acting of free grace, that when all might juſtly have periſhed, all having ſinned and come ſhort of his glory, God would yet have mercy on ſome? Have you given up yourſelves to this grace? Is this any thing of that you do believe? Suppoſe you are ſtrangers to this alſo: What communion with God have you had about it in the blood of Chriſt? We have ſhewed how forgiveneſs relates thereunto; how way is made thereby for the exerciſe of mercy, in a conſiſtency with the glory and honour of the juſtice of God, and of his law; how pardon is procured and purchaſed thereby; with the myſterious reconciliation of love and law; and the new diſpoſal of conſcience in its work and duty by it. What have you to ſay to theſe things? Have you ſeen pardon flowing from the heart of the Father, through the blood of the Son? Have you looked upon it as the price of his life, and the purchaſe of his blood? Or have you general thoughts that Chriſt died for ſinners? and that on one account or other for-

giveneſs relates unto him; but are ſtrangers to the myſtery of this great work? Suppoſe this alſo; Let us go a little further, and enquire, Whether you know any thing that yet remains of the like importance in this matter? Forgiveneſs, as we have ſhewed, is manifeſted, tendered, exhibited in the covenant of grace, and promiſe of the goſpel. The rule of the efficacy of theſe is, that they be mixed with faith, Heb. iv. 2. It is well if you are grown up hereunto; but you that are ſtrangers to the things before mentioned, are no leſs to this alſo. Upon the matter, you know not then what forgiveneſs is, nor wherein it conſiſts, nor whence it comes, or how it is procured, nor by what means given out unto ſinners. It is to no purpoſe for ſuch perſons to pretend, that they believe that whereunto, either notionally, or practically, or both, they are ſuch utter ſtrangers.

6. Another enquiry into this matter regards the ſtate and condition wherein ſouls muſt be, before it be poſſible for them to believe forgiveneſs. If there be ſuch an eſtate, and it can be evinced that very many of the pretenders, concerning whom we deal, were never brought into it, it is then evident, that they neither do nor can believe forgiveneſs, however they do and may delude their own ſouls.

It hath been ſhewed, that the firſt diſcovery that was made of pardoning grace was unto Adam, preſently after the fall. What was then his ſtate and condition? How was he prepared for the reception of this great myſtery in its firſt diſcovery? That ſeems to be a conſiderable rule of proceeding in the ſame matter. That which is firſt in any kind, is a rule of all that follows. Now, what was Adam's condition when the revelation of forgiveneſs was firſt made to him? It is known from the ſtory; convinced of ſin, afraid of puniſhment, he lay trembling at the foot of God. Then was forgiveneſs revealed unto him; ſo the Pſalmiſt ſtates it, Pſal. cxxx. ver. 3. *If thou, Lord, ſhouldſt mark iniquity, O Lord who ſhall ſtand?* Full of thoughts he is of the deſert of

ſin, and of inevitable and eternal ruin, in caſe God ſhould deal with him according to the exigence of the law. In that ſtate is the great ſupport of forgiveneſs with God, ſuggeſted unto him by the Holy Ghoſt. We know what work our Saviour had with the Phariſees on this account. *Are we* (ſay they) *blind alſo?* No ſaith he, ye ſay, *we ſee; therefore your ſin remaineth*, John ix. 40, 41. It is to no purpoſe to talk of forgiveneſs to ſuch perſons as you are, you muſt of neceſſity abide in your ſins: I came not to call ſuch righteous perſons as you are, but ſinners, to repentance; who not only are ſo, as you are alſo, and that to the purpoſe, but are ſenſible of their being ſo, and of their undone condition thereby. *The whole have no need of the phyſician, but the ſick.* Whilſt you are ſeeming righteous and whole, it is to no end to tell you of forgiveneſs, you cannot underſtand it, nor receive it. It is impoſſible then, that any ſhould in a due manner believe forgiveneſs in God, unleſs in a due manner he be convinced of ſin in himſelf. If the fallow ground be not broken up, it is to no purpoſe to ſow the ſeed of the goſpel. There is neither life, power, nor ſweetneſs in his truth, unleſs a door be opened for its entrance by conviction of ſin.

Let us then, on this ground alſo, continue our enquiry upon the ordinary boaſters of their ſkill in this myſtery. You believe there is forgiveneſs with God: Yes; But have you been convinced of ſin? Yes; you know that you are ſinners well enough. Anſwer then but once more as to the nature of this conviction of ſin, which you ſay you have; Is it not made up of theſe two ingredients? (1.) A general notion that you are ſinners, as all men alſo are. (2.) Particular troubleſome reflections upon yourſelves, when on any eruption of ſin, conſcience accuſes, rebukes, condemns? You will ſay, Yes, what would you require more? This is not the conviction we are enquiring after; that is a work of the Spirit by the word: This you ſpeak of, a mere natural work, which you can no more

more be without, than you can ceaſe to be men. This will give no aſſiſtance unto the receiving of forgiveneſs: But it may be you will ſay, you have proceeded farther than ſo; and theſe things have had an improvement in you. Let us then a little try whether your proceſs hath been according to the mind of God; and ſo whether this invincible bar in your way be removed or no: For altho' every convinced perſon doth not believe forgiveneſs; yet no one who is not convinced doth ſo. Have you then been made ſenſible of your condition by nature; what it is to be alienated from the life of God, and to be obnoxious to his wrath? Have you been convinced of the univerſal enmity that is in your hearts to the mind of God; and what it is to be at enmity againſt God? Hath the unſpeakable multitude of the ſins of our lives been ſet in order by the law before you? And have you conſidered what it is for ſinners, ſuch ſinners as you are, to have to deal with a righteous and holy God? Hath the Holy Ghoſt wrought a ſerious recognition in your hearts of all theſe things, and cauſed them to abide with you and upon you? If you will anſwer truly, you muſt ſay, many of you, that indeed you have not been ſo exerciſed. You have heard of theſe things many times, but to ſay that you have gone through with this work, and have had experience of them, that you cannot do. Then I ſay, you are ſtrangers to forgiveneſs, becauſe you are ſtrangers unto ſin: But and if you ſhall ſay, that you have had thoughts to this purpoſe; and are perſwaded that you have been throughly convinced of ſin, I ſhall yet aſk you one queſtion more; What effects hath your conviction produced in your hearts and lives? Have you been filled with perplexities and conſternation of ſpirit thereupon? Have you had fears, dreads or terrors to wreſtle withal? It may be you will ſay, No; Nor will I inſiſt upon that enquiry; but this I deal with you in. Hath it filled you with ſelf loathing and abhorrency, with ſelf-condemnation, and abaſement? If it will do any thing, this it will do. If you come ſhort here, it is juſtly to be

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feared that all your other pretences are of no value; now, where there is no work of conviction, there is no faith of forgiveneſs, whatever is pretended. And how many vain boaſters this ſword will cut off, is evident.

7. We have yet a greater evidence than all theſe. Men live in ſin, and therefore they do not believe forgiveneſs of ſin. Faith in general purifies the heart, Acts xv. 19. Our ſouls are purified in obeying the truth. 1 Pet. i. 22. and the life is made fruitful by it, James ii. 22. Faith worketh by works, and makes itſelf perfect by them. And the doctrine concerning forgiveneſs hath a ſpecial influence into all holineſs, Tit. ii. 11, 12. *The grace of God which bringeth ſalvation, teacheth us to deny all unrighteouſneſs, and worldly luſts, to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world:* And that is the grace whereof we ſpeak. No man can then believe forgiveneſs of ſin, without a deteſtation and relinquiſhment of it. The ground of this might be farther manifeſted, and the way of the efficacy of faith of forgiveneſs unto a forſaking of ſin, if need were: But all that own the goſpel muſt acknowledge this principle. The real belief of the pardon of ſin, is prevalent with men not to live longer in ſin.

But now, what are the greateſt number of thoſe who pretend to receive this truth? Are their hearts purified by it? Are their conſciences purged? Are their lives changed? Do they deny all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts? Doth forgiveneſs teach them ſo to do? Have they found it effectual to theſe purpoſes? Whence is it then that there is ſuch a bleating and bellowing to the contrary amongſt them? Some of you are drunkards, ſome of you are ſwearers, ſome of you unclean perſons, ſome of you liars, ſome of you worldly, ſome of you haters of all the ways of Chriſt, and all his concernments upon the earth; proud, covetous, boaſters, ſelf-ſeekers, envious, wrathful, backbiters, malicious praters, ſlanderers, and the like: And ſhall we think that ſuch as theſe believe forgiveneſs of ſin? God forbid. Again,

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ſome of you are dark, ignorant, blind, utterly unacquainted with the myſtery of the goſpel, nor do at all make it your buſineſs to enquire into it. Either you hear it not at all, or negligently, ſlothfully, cuſtomarily, to no purpoſe. Let not ſuch perſons deceive their own ſouls; to live in ſin, and yet to believe the forgiveneſs of ſin, is utterly impoſſible. Chriſt will not be a miniſter of ſin, nor give his goſpel to be a doctrine of licentiouſneſs for your ſakes: Nor ſhall you be forgiven, that you may be delivered to do more abominations. God forbid.

If any ſhall ſay, that they thank God, they are no ſuch publicans as thoſe mentioned; they are no drunkards, no ſwearers, no unclean perſons, nor the like; ſo that they are not concerned in this conſideration: Their lives and their duties give another account of them. Then yet conſider further.

That the Phariſees were all that you ſay of yourſelves; and yet the greateſt deſpiſers of forgiveneſs that were ever in the world, and that becauſe they hated the light, on this account, that their deeds were evil. And for your duties you mention, what I pray is the root and ſpring of them? Are they influenced from this faith of forgiveneſs you boaſt of, or no? May it not be feared that it is utterly otherwiſe? You do not perform them becauſe you love the goſpel, but becauſe you fear the law. If the truth were known, I doubt it would appear, that you get nothing by your believing of pardon, but an encouragement unto ſin. Your goodneſs, ſuch as it is, ſprings from another root. It may be alſo that you ward yourſelves by it againſt the ſtrokes of conſcience, or the guilt of particular ſins, this is as bad as the other. It is as good be encouraged unto ſin to commit it, as be encouraged under ſin, ſo as to be kept from humiliation for it. None under heaven are more remote from the belief of grace and pardon, than ſuch perſons are: All their righteouſneſs is from the law, and their ſin in a great meaſure from the goſpel.

8. They that believe forgiveneſs in a due manner, believe

believe it for the ends and purpoſes for which it is revealed of God. This will further improve and carry on the farther conſideration. If God reveals any thing for one end and purpoſe, and men uſe it quite unto another; they do not receive the word of God, nor believe the thing revealed, but ſteal the word, and delude their own ſouls.

Let us then weigh to what end and purpoſes this forgiveneſs was firſt revealed by God; for which alſo its manifeſtation is ſtill continued in the goſpel. We have ſhewed before who it was to whom this revelation was firſt made, and what condition he was in when it was ſo made unto him. A loſt wretched creature, without hope or help he was; how he ſhould come to obtain acceptance with God, he knew not. God reveals forgiveneſs unto him by Chriſt to be his All. The intention of God in it was, that a ſinner's All ſhould be of grace, Rom. xi. 6. If any thing be added unto it for the ſame end and purpoſe, then grace is no more grace. Again, God intended it as a new foundation of obedience, of love and thankfulneſs. That men ſhould love becauſe forgiven, and be holy, becauſe pardoned; as I have ſhewed before, that it might be the righteouſneſs of a ſinner, and a ſpring of new obedience in him, all to the praiſe of Grace, were God's ends in its revelation.

Our enquiry then is, whether men do receive this revelation as unto theſe ends, and uſe it for theſe purpoſes, and theſe only. I might evince the contrary, by paſſing through the general abuſes of the doctrine of grace, which are mentioned in the ſcripture, and common in the world; but it will not be needful. Inſtead of believing, the moſt of men ſeem to put a ſtudied deſpight on the goſpel. They either proclaim it to be an unholy and polluted way, by turning its grace into laſciviouſneſs, or a weak and inſufficient way, by ſtriving to twiſt it in with their own righteouſneſs, both which are an abomination unto the Lord.

From theſe, and ſuch other conſiderations of the like im-

importance, as might be added, it is evident that our word is not in vain; nor the exhortation which is to be built upon it. It appears, that notwithstanding the great noise and pretences to this purpose that are in the world, they are but few who seriously receive this fundamental truth of the gospel; namely that there is forgiveness with God. Poor creatures sport themselves with their own deceivings, and perish by their own delusions.

Exhortation unto the belief of the forgiveness that is with God.-----Reasons for it, and the necessity of it.

We shall now proceed unto the direct uses of this great truth: For having laid our foundation in the word that will not fail, and having given, as we hope, sufficient evidence unto the truth of it, our last work is to make this improvement of it unto the good of the souls of men, which all along was aimed at. The persons concerned in this truth are all sinners whatever; no sort of sinners are unconcerned in it, none are excluded from it: And we may cast them all under two heads.

First, Such as never sincerely closed with the promise of grace; nor have ever yet received forgiveness from God, in a way of believing. These we have already endeavoured to undeceive; and to discover those false presumptions whereby they are apt to ruin and destroy their own souls: These we would guide now into safe and pleasant paths, wherein they may find assured rest and peace.

Secondly, Others there are, who have received it, but being again entangled by sin, or clouded by darkness and temptations, or weakened by unbelief, know not how to improve it to their peace and comfort. This is the condition of the soul represented in this psalm,

and which we ſhall therefore apply ourſelves unto in an eſpecial manner, in its proper place.

Our exhortation then is unto both; to the firſt, that they would receive it, that they may have life, to the latter that they would improve it, that they may have peace. To the former, that they would not overlook, diſregard, or neglect ſo great ſalvation as is tendered unto them; to the latter, that they would ſtir up the grace of God that is in them, to mix with the grace of God that is unto them.

I ſhall begin with the firſt ſort, thoſe who are yet utter ſtrangers from the covenant of grace? who never yet, upon ſaving grounds, believe this forgiveneſs; who never yet once taſted of goſpel pardon. Poor ſinners! This word is unto you.

Be it that you have heard or read the ſame word before, or others like unto it, to the ſame purpoſe; it may be often, it may be an hundred times. It is your concernment to hear it again. God would have it ſo; the teſtimony of Jeſus Chriſt is thus to be accompliſhed. This counſel of God we muſt declare, that we may be free *from the blood of all men*, Acts xx. 26, 27. and that not once or twice, but in preaching the word, we muſt *be inſtant in ſeaſon, out of ſeaſon, reproving, rebuking, exhorting, with all long-ſuffering and doctrine*, 2 Tim. iv. 2. And for you, wo unto you, when God leaves thus ſpeaking unto you; when he refuſeth to exhort you any more, wo unto you. This is God's departure from any perſon or people, when he will deal with them no more about forgiveneſs; and ſaith he, *Wo unto them when I depart from them*, Hoſ. ix. 12. O that God therefore would give unto ſuch perſons ſeeing eyes, and hearing ears, that the word of grace may never more be ſpoken unto them in vain. Now, in our exhortation to ſuch perſons, we ſhall proceed gradually, according as the matter will bear, and the nature of it doth require. Conſider therefore,

1. That notwithſtanding all your ſins, all the evil that your own hearts know you to be guilty of, and that

that hidden mass or evil treasure of sin, which is in you, which you are not able to look into; notwithstanding that charge that lies upon you from your own conscience, and that dreadful sentence and curse of the law which you are obnoxious unto; notwithstanding all the just grounds that you have to apprehend that God is your enemy, and will be so unto eternity; yet there are terms of peace and reconciliation provided and proposed between him and your souls. This, in the first place is spoken out by the word we have insisted on. Whatever else it informs us of, this it positively asserts; namely, that there is a way whereby sinners may come to be accepted with God: For there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared. And we hope that we have not confirmed it, by so many testimonies, by so many evidences, in vain. Now, that you may see how great a privilege this is, and how much your concernment lies in it; consider,

1*st*. That this belongs unto you in an especial manner, it is your peculiar advantage.

It is not so with the angels that sinned. There were never any terms of peace or reconciliation proposed unto them, nor ever shall be unto eternity. There is no way of escape provided for them. Having once sinned, as you have done a thousand times, God spared them not, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them unto chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment, 2 Pet. ii. 4.

It is not so with them that are dead in their sins, if but one moment past. Ah, how would many souls, who are departed, it may be not an hour since, out of this world, rejoice for an interest in this privilege, the hearing of terms of peace once more between God and them; but their time is past, their house is left unto them desolate. As the tree falleth, so it must ly: *It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that is the judgment*, Heb. ix. 27. After death there are no terms of peace, nothing but judgment. The living, the living, he alone is capable of this advantage.

It is not so with them to whom the gospel is not preached. God suffers them to walk in their own ways, and calls them not thus to repentance. The terms of reconciliation, which some fancy to be offered in the shining of the sun, and falling of the rain, never brought souls to peace with God. Life and immortality are brought to light only by the gospel. This is your privilege who yet live, and yet have the word sounding in your ears.

It is not thus with them who have sinned against the Holy Ghost, though yet alive, and living where the word of forgiveness is preached. God proposeth unto them no terms of reconciliation. Blasphemy against him, saith Christ, shall not be forgiven, Matth. xii. 31. There is no forgiveness for such sinners; and we, if we knew them, ought not to pray for them, 1 John v. 16. *Their sin is unto death.* And what number may be in this condition God knows.

This word then is unto you; these terms of peace are proposed unto you. This is that which in an especial manner you are to apply yourselves unto: and wo unto you, if you shall be found to have neglected it at the last day. Wherefore consider,

2dly, By whom these terms are proposed unto you, and by whom they were procured for you. By whom are they proposed? Who shall undertake to impire the business, the controversy between God and sinners? No creature doubtless is either meet or worthy to interpose in this matter; I mean originally on his account. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? Wherefore, it is God himself who proposeth the terms; and not only proposeth them, but invites, exhorts, and persuades you to accept of of them. This the whole scriptures testify unto. It is fully expressed, 2 Cor. 19, 20. he hath provided them, he hath proposed them, and makes use only of men, of ministers, to act in his name. And excuse us if we are a little earnest with you in this matter: Alas, our utmost that we can, by zeal for his glory, or compassion

on unto your ſouls, raiſe our thoughts, minds, ſpirits, words, unto, comes infinitely ſhort of his own preſſing earneſtneſs herein. See Iſa. lv. 1, 2, 3, 4. Oh infinite condeſcenſion! O bleſſed grace! Who is this that thus beſpeaks you? He againſt whom you have ſinned, of whom you are juſtly afraid. He whoſe laws you have broken, and whoſe name you have diſhonoured; He who needs not you, nor your love, nor your friendſhip, nor your ſalvation. It is he who propoſeth unto you theſe terms of reconciliation and peace. Conſider the exhortation of the apoſtle upon this conſideration, Heb. xii. 25. *See that you refuſe not him that ſpeaketh from heaven.* It is God that ſpeaks unto you in this matter; and he ſpeaks unto you from heaven. And he doth therein forego all the advantage that he hath againſt you for your deſtruction. Wo would be unto your ſouls, and that for ever, if you ſhould refuſe him.

3*dly*, By whom were theſe terms procured for you? and by what means? Do not think that this matter was brought about by chance, or by an ordinary undertaking. Remember that the propoſal made unto you this day coſt no leſs than the price of the blood of the Son of God. It is the fruit of the travail of his ſoul. For this he prayed, he wept, he ſuffered, he died. And ſhall it now be neglected or deſpiſed by you? Will you yet account the blood of the covenant to be a common thing? Will you exclude yourſelves from all benefit of the purchaſe of theſe terms, and only leave your ſouls to anſwer for the contempt of the price whereby they were purchaſed?

4*thly*, Conſider, that you are ſinners, great ſinners, curſed ſinners; ſome of you, it may be worſe than innumerable of your fellow-ſinners who are now in hell: God might long ſince have caſt you of everlaſtingly, from all expectation of mercy, and have cauſed all your hopes to periſh: Or he might have left you alive, and yet have refuſed to deal with you any more. He could have cauſed your ſun to go down at noon-day, and have given you darkneſs inſtead of viſion. He could reſpite your

your lives for a ſeaſon, and yet ſwear in his wrath, that you ſhould never enter into his reſt. It is now otherwiſe; how long it may be ſo, nor you, nor I know any thing at all. God only knows what will be your time, what your continuance. We are to ſpeak whilſt it is called to-day: And this is that for the preſent which I have to offer unto you: God declares that there is forgiveneſs with him; that your condition is not deſperate nor helpleſs: There are yet terms of peace propoſed unto you. Methinks it cannot but ſeem ſtrange, that poor ſinners ſhould not at the leaſt ſtir up themſelves to enquire after them. When a poor man had ſold himſelf of old, and his children, to be ſervants, and parted with the land of his inheritance unto another, becauſe of his poverty; with what heart do you think did he hear the ſound of the trumpet, when it began to proclaim the year of jubilee, wherein he and all his were to go out at liberty, and to return unto his poſſeſſion and inheritance? And ſhall not poor ſervants of ſin, ſlaves unto Satan, that have forfeited all their inheritance in this world, and that which is to come, attend unto any proclamation of the year of reſt, of the acceptable year of the Lord? And this is done in the tender of terms of peace with God in this matter. Do not put it off; this thing belongs unto you; the great concernment of your ſoul lies in it. And it is a great matter: For conſider,

5*thly*, That when the angels came to bring the news of the birth of our Lord Jeſus, they ſay, We bring tidings of great joy to the whole people, Luke ii. 10. What are theſe joyful tidings? What was the matter of this report? Why, *This day is born a Saviour, Chriſt the Lord*, ver. 11. It is only this; a Saviour is born; a way of eſcape is provided, and further they do not proceed. Yet this they ſay is a matter of great joy, as it was indeed. It is ſo to every burdened convinced ſinner, a matter of unſpeakable joy and rejoicing. Oh bleſſed words! a Saviour is born. This gives life to a ſinner, and opens a door of hope in the valley of Achor,

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the firſt reſcue of a ſin diſtreſſed ſoul. Upon the matter, it was all that the ſaints for many ages had to live upon; and that not in the enjoyment, but only the expectation, They lived on that word, *The ſeed of the woman ſhall break the ſerpents head;* that is, a way of deliverance is provided for ſinners. This with all diligence they enquired into, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11, 12. and improved it to their eternal advantage. As of old, Jacob, when he ſaw the waggons that his ſon Joſeph had ſent to bring him unto him, it is ſaid his ſpirit revived: So did they upon their obſcure diſcovery of a way of forgiveneſs. They looked upon the promiſe of it, as that which God had ſent to bring them unto him; and they ſaw the day of the coming of Chriſt in it, and rejoiced. How much more have ſinners now reaſon ſo to do, when the ſubſtance of the promiſe is exhibited, and the news of his coming proclaimed unto them. This then is a great matter; namely, that terms of peace and reconciliation are propoſed; in that it is made known, that there is forgiveneſs with God. Upon theſe conſiderations then we purſue that exhortation which we have in hand.

If any of you were juſtly condemned to a cruel and ſhameful death, and lay trembling in the expectation of the execution of it, and a man deſigned for that purpoſe ſhould come unto him, and tell him, that there were terms propounded on which his life might be ſpared only he came away like Ahimaaz before he heard the particulars; would it not be a reviving unto him? would he not cry out, Pray enquire what they are, for there is not any thing ſo difficult which I will not undergo to free myſelf from this miſerable condition: Would it not change the whole frame of the ſpirit of ſuch a man, and as it were put new life into him? but now, if inſtead hereof, he ſhould be froward, ſtubborn, and obſtinate, take no notice of the meſſenger, to ſay, Let the judge keep his terms to himſelf, without enquiring what they are; that he would have nothing to do with them; Would not ſuch a perſon be deemed to periſh de-

deſervedly? Doth he not bring a double deſtruction upon himſelf; firſt of deſerving death by his crimes, and then by refuſing the honeſt and good way of delivery tendred unto him? I confeſs it oftentimes falls out, that men may come to enquire after theſe terms of peace, which when they are revealed, they like them not, but with the young man in the goſpel, they go away ſorrowful. The curſed wickedneſs and miſery of which condition, which befals many convinced perſons, ſhall be ſpoken unto afterwards. At preſent I ſpeak unto them who never yet attended in ſincerity unto theſe terms nor ſeriouſly enquired after them. Think you what you pleaſe of your condition, and of your ſelves; or chooſe whether you will think of it or no, paſs your time in a full regardleſneſs of your preſent and future eſtate. Yet indeed thus it is with you, as to your eternal concerns; you ly under the ſentence of a bitter, ſhameful, and everlaſting death; you have done ſo in the midſt of all your jollity, ever ſince you came into this world; and you are in the hand of him, who can in the twinkling of an eye deſtroy both ſoul and body in hell-fire. In this ſtate and condition, men are ſent on purpoſe, to let you know that there are terms of peace, there is yet a way of eſcape for you; and that you may not avoid the iſſue aimed at, they tell you, that God that cannot lie, hath commanded them to tell you ſo: If you queſtion the truth of what they ſay, they are ready to produce their warrant under God's own hand and ſeal; here then is no room for tergiverſation or excuſes. Certainly, if you have any care of your eternal eſtate, if you have any drop of tender blood running in your veins towards your own ſouls, if you have any rational conſiderations dwelling in your minds, if all be not defaced and obliterated through the power of luſt, and love of ſin, you cannot but take your ſelves to be unſpeakably concerned in this propoſal. But now, if inſtead hereof, you give your ſelves up unto the power of unbelief, the will of Satan, the love of your luſts, and this preſent world, ſo as to take no notice of this errand or meſſage

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from God, nor once ſeriouſly to enquire after the nature and importance of the terms propoſed, Can you eſcape? Shall you be delivered? Will your latter end be peace? The Lord knows it will be otherwiſe with you, and that unto eternity.

So the apoſtle aſſures us, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. *If our goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, leſt the light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt, who is the image of God ſhould ſhine into them.* If you receive not this word, if it be hid from you, it is from the power and efficacy of Satan upon your minds. And what will be the end? Periſh you muſt, and ſhall, and that for ever.

Remember the parable of our Saviour, Luke xiv. 31, 32. *What king, going to make war againſt another king, ſitteth not down firſt, and conſulteth, whether he be able with ten thouſand to meet him that cometh againſt him with twenty thouſand; or elſe, while the other is yet a great way off, he ſendeth an ambaſſage, and deſireth conditions of peace.* That which he teacheth in this parable, is, the neceſſity that lies on us, of making peace with God, whom we have provoked and juſtly made to be our enemy; as alſo, our utter impotency to reſiſt and withſtand him, when he ſhall come forth in a way of judgment and vengeance againſt us. But here lies a difference in this matter, ſuch as is allowed in all ſimilitudes; amongſt men at variance, it is not his part who is the ſtronger, and ſecure of ſucceſs, to ſend to the weaker, whom he hath in his power, to accept of terms of peace. Here it is otherwiſe, God who is infinitely powerful, juſtly provoked, and able to deſtroy poor ſinners in a moment; when now he is not very far off, but at the very door, ſends himſelf an ambaſſage with conditions of peace. And ſhall he be refuſed by you? Will you yet neglect his offers? How great then will be your deſtruction?

Hear then, once more, poor ſin-hardened ſenſeleſs ſoul. *ye ſtout-hearted, that are far from righteouſneſs.*

Is it nothing unto you, that the great and holy God whom ye have provoked all your days, and whom you yet continue to provoke, who hath not the leaſt need of you, or your ſalvation, who can, when he pleaſeth, eternally glorify himſelf in your deſtruction, ſhould of his own accord ſend unto you, to let you know that he is willing to be at peace with you, on the terms he had prepared? The enmity began on your part, the danger is on your part only; and he might juſtly expect, that the meſſage for peace ſhould begin on your part alſo: But he begins with you; and ſhall he be rejected? The prophet well expreſſeth this, Iſa. xxx. 15. *Thus ſaith the Lord God, the holy One of Iſrael, in returning and reſt ſhall ye be ſaved, in quietneſs and confidence ſhall be your ſtrength; and you would not.* The love and condeſcenſion that is in theſe words, on the one hand, on the part of God, and the folly and ingratitude mentioned in them on the other hand, is inexpreſſible. They are fearful words; *But you would not.* Remember this againſt another day. As our Saviour ſays in the like manner to the Jews; *You will not come unto me, that ye may have life.* Whatever is pretended, it is will and ſtubborneſs that ly at the bottom of this refuſal.

Wherefore, that either you may obtain advantage by it, or that the way of the Lord may be prepared for the glorifying of himſelf upon you, I ſhall leave this word before all them that hear, or read it, as the teſtimony which God requires to be given unto his grace. There are terms of peace with God provided for you, and tendred unto you; it is yet called to-day, *harden not your hearts*, like them of old, who could not enter into the reſt of God, by reaſon of unbelief, Heb iii. 19. Some of you, it may be, are old in ſins, and unacquainted with God; ſome of you, it may be, have been great ſinners, ſcandalous ſinners; and ſome of you, it may be, have reaſon to apprehend yourſelves near the grave, and ſo alſo to hell; ſome of you, it may be, have your conſcience diſquieted and galled; and it may be, ſome of you

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are under ſome outward troubles, and perplexities, that cauſe you a little to look about you; and ſome of you, it may be, are in the madneſs of your natural ſtrength and luſts; your breaſts are full of milk, and your bones of marrow, and your hearts of ſin, pride, and contempt of the ways of God: All is one: This word is unto you all; and I ſhall only mind you, *That it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God:* You hear the voice, or read the words of a poor worm, but the meſſage is the meſſage, and the word is the word of him who ſhaketh heaven and earth. Conſider then well what you have to do; and what anſwer you will return unto him who will not be mocked.

But you will ſay; Why, what great matter is there that you have in hand? Why is it urged with ſo much earneſtneſs? We have heard the ſame words an hundred times over. The laſt Lord's day, ſuch a one, or ſuch a one, preached to the ſame purpoſe, and what need it be inſiſted on now again, with ſo much importunity?

But is it ſo indeed, that you have thus frequently been dealt withal, and do yet continue in an eſtate of irreconciliation? My heart is pained for you, to think of your woful and almoſt remedileſs condition. If he that *being often reproved, and yet ſtiffeneth his neck, ſhall periſh ſuddenly, and that without remedy*, Prov. xxix. 1. how much more will he do ſo, who being often invited nnto peace with God, yet hardeneth his heart, and refuſeth to treat with him? Methinks I hear his voice concerning you; *Thoſe mine enemies, they ſhall not taſte of the ſupper that I have prepared.* Be it then, that the word in hand is a common word unto you, you ſet no value upon it; then take your way and courſe in ſin; ſtumble, fall, and periſh; It is not ſo ſlight a matter to poor convinced ſinners, that tremble at the word of God; theſe will prize it, and improve it. We ſhall follow then that counſel, Prov. xxxi. 6. *Give ſtrong drink unto him that is ready to periſh, and wine to thoſe that be of an heavy heart.* We ſhall tender this new wine of the

gospel to poor sad-hearted, conscience-distressed sinners, sinners that are ready to perish; to them it will be pleasant, they will *drink of it, and forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more.* It shall take away all their sorrow and sadness; when you shall be drunk with the fruit of your lusts, and spue, and ly down, and not rise again.

But now, if any of you shall begin to say in your hearts, That you would willingly treat with God; Oh that the day were come wherein we might approach unto him! Let him speak what he pleaseth, and propose what terms he pleaseth, we are ready to hear. Then consider,

Secondly, That the terms provided for you, and proposed unto you, are equal, holy, righteous, yea pleasant, and easy. This being another general head of our work in hand, before I proceed to the further explication and confirmation of it, I shall adduce one or two observations from what hath been delivered on the first. As,

1. See here on what foundation we preach the gospel. Many disputes there are, whether Christ died for all individuals of mankind, or no: If we say, No, but only for the elect, who are some of all sorts; some then tell us, we cannot invite all men promiscuously to believe. But why so? we invite not men, as all men; no man, as one of all men, but all men as sinners: And we know that Christ died for sinners. But is this the first thing that we are in the dispensation of the gospel to propose to the soul of a sinner, under the law; that Christ died for him in particular? Is that the beginning of our message unto him? Were not this a ready way to induce him to conclude, Let me then continue in sin that grace may abound; No, but this is in order of nature our first work; even that which we have had in hand. This is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, this is the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord. There is a way of reconciliation provided. *God is in Christ reconciling the world*

world unto himself. There is a way of acceptance; there is forgiveneſs with him to be obtained. At this threſhold of the Lord's houſe, doth the greateſt part of men to whom the goſpel is preached fall and periſh, never looking in to ſee the treaſures that are in the houſe itſelf, never coming into any ſuch ſtate and condition, wherein they have any grouud or bottom to enquire, whether Chriſt died for them in particular or no. They believe not this report, nor take any ſerious notice of it. This was the miniſtry of the Baptiſt, and they, who received it not, rejected the counſel of God concerning their ſalvation, Luke vii. 10. And ſo periſhed in their ſins. This is the ſum of the bleſſed invitation given by wiſdom, Prov. ix. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. And here men ſtumble, fall, and periſh, Prov. i. 29, 30.

2. You that have found grace and favour to accept of theſe terms, and thereby to obtain peace with God; learn to live in an holy admiration of his condeſcenſion and love therein. That he would provide ſuch terms; that he would reveal them unto you; that he would enable you to receive them. Unſpeakable love and grace lies in it all. Many have not theſe terms revealed unto them; few find favour to accept of them; and of whom is it that you have obtained this peculiar mercy.

Do you aright conſider the nature of this matter? The ſcripture propoſeth it as an object of eternal admiration, *So God loved the world! herein is love, not that we loved God but he loved us firſt.* Live in this admiration, and do your utmoſt in your ſeveral capacities to prevail with your friends, relations, acquaintance, to hearken after this great treaty of peace with God, whoſe terms we ſhall nextly conſider, as before in general they were expreſſed.

Secondly, The terms provided for you, and propoſed unto you, are equal, holy, righteous, yea pleaſant and eaſy, Hoſ. ii. 18, 19. They are not ſuch, as a curſed guilty ſinner might juſtly expect, but ſuch as are meet for an infinitely good and gracious God to propoſe; nor ſuited to the wiſdom of man, but full of the wiſdom

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of God. 2 Cor. ii. 6, 7. The poor convinced wretch thinking of dealing with God, Micah. vi. 6, 7. rolls in his mind what terms he is like to meet withal; and fixes on the moſt dreadful, difficult, and impoſſible terms that can be imagined. If, ſaith he any thing be done with this great and moſt high God, it muſt be by rivers, thouſands, and ten thouſands, children, firſt born; whatever is dreadful and terrible to nature, whatever is impoſſible for me to perform, that is it which he looks for. But the matter is quite otherwiſe; the terms are wholly of another nature; it is a way of mercy, a way of free forgiveneſs. The apoſtle lays it down, Rom. iii. 23, 24, 25. it is a way of propitiation, of pardon, of forgiveneſs, in the blood of Chriſt; the terms are the acceptance of the forgiveneſs that we have deſcribed. Who would not think now, that the whole world would run in to be made partakers of theſe terms, willingly accepting of them. But it proves for the moſt part quite otherwiſe. Men like not this way of all others. It had been ſomething, ſays Naaman, if the prophet had come and done ſo and ſo; but this, *Go, waſh and be clean*, I do not like it, I am but deluded. Men think within themſelves, that had it been ſome great thing that was required of them that they might be ſaved, they would with all ſpeed addreſs themſelves thereunto; but to come to God by Chriſt, to be freely forgiven without more ado, they like it not. Some rigid auſtere penances, ſome compenſatory obedience, ſome ſatisfactory mortification. or purgatory, had been a more likely way. This of mere pardon, in and by the croſs, it is but folly, 1 Cor. i. 18. 20. I had rather, ſaith the Jew, have it as it were by the works of the law, Rom. ix. 32. and chap. x. 3. This way of grace and forgiveneſs, I like not, ſo ſay others alſo: So practiſe others every day; either this way is wholly rejected, or it is mended by ſome additions; which, with God, is all one with the rejection of it.

Here multitudes of ſouls deceive themſelves and periſh. I know not whether it be more difficult to perſwade

ſwade an unconvinced perſon to think of any terms, or a convinced perſon to accept of theſe. Let men ſay what they will, and pretend what they pleaſe; yet practically they like not this way of forgiveneſs. I ſhall therefore offer ſome ſubſervient conſiderations, tending to the furtherance of your ſouls, in the acceptance of the terms propoſed.

This is the way, theſe are terms of God's own chooſing; He found out this way, he eſtabliſhed it himſelf. He did it not upon our deſire, requeſt or propoſal, but merely of his own accord; and why ſhould we contend with him about it? If God will have us ſaved in a way of mere mercy and forgiveneſs; if his wiſdom; and ſovereignty be in it, ſhall we oppoſe him, and ſay we like it not? Yet this is the language of unbelief, Rom. x. 3, 4. Many poor creatures have diſputed it with God, until at length, being over-powered as it were by the Spirit, have ſaid, If it muſt be ſo, and God will ſave us by mercy and grace, let it be ſo, we yield ourſelves to his will; and yet throughout their diſputes dreamed of nothing, but that their own unworthineſs only kept them from cloſing with the promiſe of the goſpel.

Of this nature was that way of Satan whereby he deceived our firſt parents of their intereſt in the covenant of works; the terms of it, ſaith he, as apprehended by you, are unequal. *Yea, hath God ſaid, Ye ſhall eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, ye ſhall not eat, leſt ye die;* come, *you ſhall not die, for God doth know, in the day you eat thereof, your eyes ſhall be opened* There is no proportion between the obedience and the threatning. The iſſue cannot be ſuch as is feared: And by theſe means he ruined them. Thus alſo he proceeds to deprive ſouls of their intereſt in the covenant of grace, whereunto they are invited. The terms of it are unequal, how can any man believe them? There is no proportion between the obedience and the promiſe. To have pardon, forgiveneſs, life, and bleſſed eternity on believing, who

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can reſt in it? And here lies a conſpiracy between Satan and unbelief, againſt the wiſdom, goodneſs, love, grace and ſovereignty of God. The poiſon of this deceit lies in this, that neither the righteouſneſs, nor the mercy of God is of that infiniteneſs, as indeed they are. The apoſtle, to remove this fond imagination, calls us to the pleaſure of God, 1 Cor. i. 21. *It pleaſed God by the fooliſhneſs of preaching*, that is, by the goſpel preached, which they eſteemed fooliſhneſs, to ſave believers. He ſuffered men indeed to make trial of other ways; and when their inſufficiency for the ends men propoſed to themſelves was ſufficiently manifeſted, it pleaſed him to reveal his way. And what are we, that we ſhould contend about it with him? This rejection of the way of perſonal righteouſneſs, and chooſing the way of grace and forgiveneſs, God aſſerts, Jer. xxxi. 31, 32, 33, 34. *Behold the days come ſaith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the houſe of Iſrael and the houſe of Judah. Not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers:* (in which adminiſtration of the covenant, as far as it had reſpect unto typical mercies, much depended on their perſonal obedience) *But this ſhall be the covenant that I will make with the houſe of Iſrael, after thoſe days ſaith the Lord,*--------*I will put my laws*, &c. *and I will forgive their iniquities, and remember their ſins no more.* Let then this way ſtand, and the way of mans wiſdom and ſelf righteouſneſs periſh for ever.

2. This is the way that above others tends directly and immediately to the glory of God. God hath managed and ordered all things in this way of forgiveneſs, ſo as *no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence*, but that *he that glorieth ſhould glory in the Lord*, 1 Cor. i. 29. 31. *Where then is boaſting? It is excluded; by what law? By the law of works; nay, but by the law of faith*, Rom. iii. 27. It might be eaſily manifeſted, that God hath ſo laid the deſign of ſaving ſinners by forgiveneſs according to the law of faith, that it is utterly impoſſible that any ſoul ſhould, on any account whatever, have the leaſt ground

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of glorying or boaſting in itſelf, either abſolutely or in compariſon with them that periſh. If Abraham ſaith the ſame apoſtle, *were juſtified by works, he had whereof to glory, but not before God*, chap. iv. 2. The obedience of works would have been ſo infinitely diſproportionate to the reward, which was God himſelf, that there had been no glorying before God; but therein his goodneſs and grace muſt be acknowledged, yet in compariſon with others, who yielded not the obedience required, he would have had wherein to glory; but now this alſo is caſt off by the way of forgiveneſs, and no pretence is left for any to claim the leaſt ſhare in the glory of it, but God alone; and herein lies the excellency of faith, thas it gives glory unto God, Rom. iv. 20. the denial whereof, under various pretences, is the iſſue of proud unbelief. And this is that which God will bring all unto, or they ſhall periſh; namely, that ſhame be ours, and the whole glory of our ſalvation his alone. So he expreſſeth his deſign, Iſa. xlv. 22, 23, 24, 25. ver. 22. he propoſeth himſelf as the only relief for ſinners; *Look unto me* (ſaith he) *and be ſaved, all the ends of the earth:* But what if men take ſome other courſe, and look well to themſelves, and ſo decline this way of mere mercy and grace? Why, ſaith he, ver. 23. *I have ſworn by myſelf, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteouſneſs, and ſhall not return, that unto me, every knee ſhall bow, and every tongue ſhall ſwear.* Look you unto that; but I have ſworn that you ſhall either do ſo, or anſwer your diſobedience at the day of Judgment; whereunto Paul applies thoſe words, Rom. xiv. 11. What do the ſaints hereupon? ver. 24, 25. *Surely ſhall one ſay in the Lord have I righteouſneſs and ſtrength. In the Lord ſhall all the ſeed of Iſrael be juſtified, and ſhall glory.* They bring their hearts to accept of all righteouſneſs from him, and to give all glory unto him.

God at firſt placed man in a bleſſed ſtate and condition, in ſuch a dependance on himſelf, as that he might have wrought out his eternal happineſs with a great

reputation of glory unto himſelf. *Men being in* this *honour* ſaith the pſalmiſt, *abode not.* God now fixes on another way, as I ſaid, wherein all the glory ſhall be his own, as the apoſtle at large ſets it forth, Rom. iii. 23, 24, 25, 26. Now, neither the way from which Adam fell, nor that wherein ſome angels continued, which for the ſubſtance were the ſame, is to be compared with this of forgiveneſs, as to the bringing glory unto God. I hate curioſities and conjectures in the things of God; yet, upon the account of the interpoſition of the blood of Chriſt, I think I may boldly ſay, there comes more glory to God, by ſaving one ſinner in this way of forgiveneſs, than in giving the reward of bleſſedneſs to all the angels in heaven; ſo ſeems it to appear, from that ſolemn repreſentation, we have of the aſcription of glory to God by the whole creation, Rev. v. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. All centers in the bringing forth forgiveneſs by the blood of the Lamb.

I inſiſt the more on this, becauſe it lies ſo directly againſt that curſed principle of unbelief, which reigns in the hearts of the moſt, and often diſquiets the beſt. That a poor ungodly ſinner, going to God with the guilt of all his ſins upon him, to receive forgiveneſs at his hand, doth bring more glory unto him, than the obedience of an angel, men are not over-ready to think, nor can be prepared for it, but by itſelf. And the formal nature of that unbelief, which worketh in convinced ſinners, lies in a refuſal to give unto God the whole glory of ſalvation. There are many hurtful controverſies in religion, that are managed in the world with great noiſe and clamour; but this is the greateſt and moſt pernicious of them all, and it is for the moſt part ſilently tranſacted in the ſouls of men; although under various forms and pretences. It hath alſo broken forth in writings and diſputations, that is, whether God or man ſhall have the glory of ſalvation; or, whether it ſhall wholly be aſcribed unto God, or that man alſo on one account or other, may come in for a ſhare. Now, if this be the ſtate and condition with any of you, that

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you will rather periſh, than God ſhould have his glory, what ſhall we ſay, but, go ye curſed ſouls, periſh for ever, without the leaſt compaſſion from God, or any that love him, angels or men.

If you ſhall ſay, For your parts you are contented with this courſe, let God have the glory, ſo you may be forgiven and ſaved; there is yet juſt cauſe to ſuſpect, leſt this be a ſelfiſh contempt of God. It is a great thing to give glory unto God by believing, in a due manner. Such ſlight returns ſeem not to have the leaſt relation unto it. Take heed, that inſtead of believing, you be not found mockers, and ſo your bands be made ſtrong.

But a poor convinced ſinner may here find encouragement: Thou wouldſt willingly come to acceptance with God, and ſo attain ſalvation; Oh, my ſoul longeth for it; wouldſt thou willingly take that courſe for the obtaining thoſe ends which will bring moſt glory unto God? Surely it is meet and moſt equal that I ſhould do ſo; What now, if one ſhould come and tell thee from the Lord, of a way whereby thou poor, ſinful, ſelf-condemned creature, mighteſt bring as much glory unto God, as any angel in heaven is able to do? Oh, if I might bring the leaſt glory unto God, I ſhould rejoice in it. Behold then the way which himſelf hath fixed on for the exaltation of his glory; even that thou ſhouldſt come to him merely upon the account of grace in the blood of Chriſt, for pardon and forgiveneſs, and the Lord ſtrengthen thee to give up thyſelf thereunto.

3. Conſider, That if this way of ſalvation be refuſed, there is no other way for you. We do not propoſe this way of forgiveneſs as the beſt and moſt pleaſant, but as the only way. There is no other name given but that of Chriſt; no other way but this of forgiveneſs. Here lies your choice; take this path, or periſh for ever. It is a ſhame indeed unto our curſed nature, that there ſhould be any need to uſe this argument, that will neither ſubmit to God's ſovereignty, nor delight in his glory; but ſeeing it muſt be uſed,

let it be ſo. I intend neither to flatter men, nor to frighten them; but to tell them the truth as it is. If you continue in your preſent ſtate and condition, if you reſt on what you do, or what you hope to do, if you ſupport yourſelves with general hopes of mercy, mixed with your own endeavours and obedience, if you come not up to a thorough goſpel-cloſure with this way of God, if you make it not your All, giving glory to God therein; periſh you will, and muſt, and that to eternity. There remains no more ſacrifice for ſins, nor way of eſcape for your ſouls. You have not then only the excellency of this way to invite you, but the abſolute indiſpenſable neceſſity of this way to enforce you. And now let me add, that I am glad this word is ſpoken, is written: You and I muſt one day be accountable for this diſcourſe; that word that hath already been ſpoken, if neglected, will prove a ſore teſtimony againſt you. It will not fare with you, as with other men who have not heard the joyful ſound. All theſe words that ſhall be found conſonant to the goſpel, if they are not turned to grace in your hearts here, will turn into torment unto your ſouls hereafter. Chooſe not any other way, it will be in vain for you; it will not profit you; and take heed leſt you ſuppoſe you embrace this way, when indeed you do not, about which I have given caution before.

4. This way is free and open for and unto ſinners. He that fled to the city of refuge, might well have many perplexed thoughts, whether he ſhould find the gates of it opened unto him or no, and whether the avenger of blood might not overtake and ſlay him, whilſt he was calling for entrance. Or, if the gates were always open, yet ſome crimes excluded men thence. Numb. xxxv. 24. It is not ſo here, Acts xiii. 38, 39.

This is the voice of God even the father; come, ſaith he, to the marriage, for all things are prepared, no fear of want of entertainment, Matth xxii. 4. Whence the preachers of the goſpel are ſaid, in his ſtead, to beſeech men to be reconciled, 2 Cor. v. 18.

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It is the voice of the Son; whoſoever, ſaith he, cometh to God by me, *I will in no wiſe caſt out*, John vi. 37. Who ere he be that comes, ſhall aſſuredly find entertainment; the ſame is his call and invitation in other places, as Matth. xi. 28. John vii. 37. And

This is the voice of the Spirit and of the church, and of all believers, Rev. xxii. 17. *The Spirit and the bride ſay, Come; and let him that heareth ſay, Come; and let him that is a thirſt come; and who ſoever will, let him take of the water of life freely:* All centre in this, that ſinners may come freely to the grace of the goſpel. And

It is the known voice of the goſpel itſelf, as Iſaiah lv. 1, 2, 3 Prov. ix. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. And it is the voice of all the ſaints in heaven and earth, who have been made partakers of forgiveneſs; they all teſtify, that they received it freely.

Some indeed endeavour to abuſe this concurrent teſtimony of God and man. What is ſpoken of the freedom of the grace of God, they would wreſt to the power of the will of man: But the riches and freedom of God's mercy do not in the leaſt interfere with the efficacy of his grace. Though he proclaim pardon in the blood of Chriſt indefinitely, according to the fulneſs and excellency of it, yet he giveth out his quickning grace to enable men to receive it, as he pleaſeth; for he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy: But this lies in the thing itſelf, the way is open and prepared; and it is not becauſe men cannot enter, but becauſe they will not, that they do not enter. As our Saviour Chriſt tells the Phariſees, *Ye therefore hear not God's word, becauſe ye are not of God*, John viii. 47. and John vi. 44. So he doth, *Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life*, John v. 40. In the neglect and inadvertency of the moſt excuſable, there is a poſitive act of their will put forth in the refuſing of Chriſt, and grace by him; and this is done by them under the preaching of the goſpel every day. There is nothing that, at the laſt day, will tend more immediately to the advancement of the glory of God, in the inexcuſableneſs of them who obey not the goſpel,

goſpel, than this, that terms of peace, in the bleſſed way of forgiveneſs, were freely tendered unto them. Some that hear or read this word, may perhaps have lived long under the diſpenſation of the word of grace, and yet it may be have never once ſeriouſly pondered on this way of coming to God by forgiveneſs through the blood of Chriſt; but think, that going to heaven is a thing of courſe, that men need not much trouble themſelves about; Do they know what they have done? Hitherto all their days they have poſitively refuſed the ſalvation that hath been freely tendered unto them in Jeſus Chriſt. Not they, they'll ſay, they never had ſuch a thought, nor would for all this world. But be it known unto you, in as much as you have not effectually received him, you have refuſed him; and whether your day and ſeaſon be paſt or no, the Lord only knows.

5. This way is ſafe. No ſoul ever miſcarried in it. There is none in heaven, but will ſay it is a ſafe way; there is none in hell can ſay otherwiſe. It is ſafe to all that venture on it, ſo as to enter into it. In the old way we were to preſerve ourſelves and the way. This preſerves itſelf and us; this will be made evident by the enſuing conſiderations.

Firſt, This is the way which in the wiſdom, care, and love of God in Chriſt, was provided in the room of another, removed and taken out of the way for this cauſe and reaſon, becauſe it was not ſafe, nor could bring us unto God, Heb. viii. 7, 8. *For if the firſt covenant had been faultleſs, then ſhould no place have been ſought for the ſecond; but finding fault with them, he ſaith.* And,

1*ſt*, He tells us, the firſt covenant was not faultleſs, for if it had, there would have been no need of a ſecond. The commandment indeed, which was the matter of that covenant, the ſame apoſtle informs us to be holy, juſt, and good, Rom. vii. 12. But it was faulty as to all ends of a covenant, conſidering our ſtate and condition as ſinners; it could not bring us unto God. So

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he acquaints us, Rom. viii. 3. *It was made weak thro' the flesh;* that is, by the entrance of sin, and so became unuseful as to the saving of souls. Be it so then; through our sin and default this good and holy law, this covenant, was made unprofitable unto us; But what was that unto God? Was he bound to desert his own institution and appointment, because through our own default it ceased to be profitable unto us? Not at all; he might righteously have tied us all unto the terms of that covenant, to stand or fall by them unto eternity; but he would not do so. But,

2*dly*, In his love and grace, he finds fault with it, verse 8. not in itself and absolutely, but only so far as that he would provide another way, which should supply all its defects and wants in reference to the end aimed at. What way that is, the apostle declares in the following verses, to the end of this chapter. The sum is, verse 12. *I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.* It is the way of pardon and forgiveness. This is substituted in the room of that insufficient way that was removed.

Let us consider then, whether the infinitely wise and holy God, pursuing his purpose of bringing souls unto himself, laying aside one way of his own appointment as useless and infirm, because of the coming in of sin, against which there was no relief found in it, and substituting another way in the room of it; would not provide such an one, as should be absolutely free from the faults and inconveniences which he charged upon that, which he did remove. That which alone rendered the former way faulty was sin; it could do any thing but save a sinner; this then was to be and is principally provided against in this way of forgiveness. And we see here, how clearly God hath severed, yea, and in this matter opposed these two things; namely, the way of personal righteousness, and the way of forgiveness. He finds fault with the first; What then doth he? what course doth he take? Doth he mend it, take from it what

what ſeems to be redundant, mitigate its ſeverity, and ſupply it where it is wanting by forgiveneſs, and ſo ſet it up anew? This indeed is the way that many proceed in their notions, and the moſt in their practice. But this is not the way of God; he takes the one utterly away, and eſtabliſhes the other in its place; and mens endeavours to mix them will be found of little uſe to them at the laſt. I can have no great expectation from that which God pronounced faulty.

Secondly, The unchangeable principles and foundations that this way is built upon, render it ſecure and ſafe for ſinners: For,

(1.) It is founded on the purpoſe of God, Gal. iii. 8. *The ſcripture foreſeeing that God would juſtify the heathen thro' faith.* God would do ſo, he had purpoſed and determined to proceed this way; and all the purpoſes of God are attended with immutability: And,

(2.) His promiſe alſo is engaged in it, and that given out in the way of a covenant, as hath been already declared: And,

(3.) This promiſe is confirmed by an oath; and it may be obſerved, that God doth not in any thing interpoſe with an oath, but what relates to this happy way of coming to himſelf by forgiveneſs. For the oath of God, wherever it is uſed, reſpecteth either Chriſt typically or perſonally, or the covenant eſtabliſhed in him: For,

(4.) This way is confirmed and ratified in his blood, from whence the apoſtle at large evinceth its abſolute ſecurity and ſafety, Hebrews ix. Whatever ſoul then, on the invitation under conſideration, ſhall give up himſelf to come to God by the way propoſed, he ſhall aſſuredly find abſolute peace and ſecurity in it. Neither our own weakneſs or folly from within, nor the oppoſition of any of all our enemies from without, ſhall be able to turn us out of this way. See Iſaiah xxxv. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Thirdly, In the other way, every individual perſon ſtands upon his own bottom, and muſt do ſo to the laſt, and

and utmoſt of his continuance in this world. You are deſirous to go unto God, to obtain his favour, and come to an enjoyment of him. What will you do? what courſe will you fix upon, for the obtaining of theſe ends? If you were ſo holy, ſo perfect, ſo righteous, ſo free from ſin as you could deſire, you ſhould have ſome boldneſs in going unto God; why, if this be the way you fix upon, take this along with you: you ſtand upon your own perſonal account all your days; and, if you fail in the leaſt, you are gone for ever; *For whoſoever ſhall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*, James ii. 10. And what peace can you poſſibly obtain, were you as holy as ever you aimed or deſired to be, whilſt this is your condition? But, in this way of forgiveneſs, we all ſtand upon the account of one common Mediator, in whom we are complete, Col. iii. 10. And a want of a due improvement of this truth, is a great principle of diſconſolation to many ſouls. Suppoſe a man look upon himſelf as looſed from the covenant of works, wherein exact and perfect righteouſneſs is rigidly required; and to be called unto goſpel evangelical obedience, to be performed in the room thereof, in ſincerity and integrity; yet, if he be not cleared in this alſo, that he ſtands not in this way purely on his own account, he will never be able to make his comforts hold out to the end of his journey. There will be found in the beſt of men ſo many particular failings, as will ſeem, in difficult ſeaſons, to impeach their integrity; and ſo many queſtionings will after ariſe, through the darkneſs of their minds, and power of their temptations, as will give but little reſt unto their ſouls. Here lies the great ſecurity of this way; we abide in it on the account of the faithfulneſs and ability of our common Mediator, Jeſus Chriſt.

And this is another conſideration, ſtrengthning our invitation to our cloſure with the way of coming unto God under propoſal. There is nothing wanting that is needful to give infallible ſecurity to any ſoul that ſhall venture himſelf into it, and upon it. There are terms

of peace propoſed, as you have heard. Theſe terms are excellent and holy, and choſen of God, tending to the intereſt of his glory, free, ſafe, and ſecure unto ſinners. What hath any ſoul in the world to object againſt them? or wherein do men repoſe their truſt and confidence, in the neglect of this ſo great ſalvation? Is it in their luſts and ſins, that they will yield them as much ſatisfaction and contentment as they ſhall need to deſire? Alas! they will ruin them, and bring forth nothing but death. Is it in the world? it will deceive them; the figure of it paſſeth away. Is it in their duties and righteouſneſs? they will not relieve them; for did they follow the law of righteouſneſs, they could not obtain the righteouſneſs of the law. Is it in the continuance of their lives? Alas! it is but a ſhadow, a vapour that appeareth for a little while. Is it in a future amendment and repentance? Hell is full of ſouls periſhing under ſuch reſolutions. Only this way of pardon remains, and yet of all others is moſt deſpiſed. But yet, I have one conſideration more to add, before I further enforce the exhortation.

6. Conſider, that this is the only way and means to enable you unto obedience, and to render what you do therein acceptable unto God. It may be, that ſome of you are under the power of convictions, and have made engagements unto God, to live unto him, to keep yourſelves from ſin, and to follow after holineſs. It may be, you have done ſo in affliction, dangers, ſickneſſes, or upon the receipt of mercies; but yet you find, that you cannot come unto ſtability or conſtancy in your courſe: You break with God and your own ſouls, which fills you with new diſquietments, or elſe hardens you, and makes you ſecure and negligent; ſo that you return unto your purpoſes no oftner than your convictions or afflictions befal you anew. This condition is ruinous and pernicious, which nothing can deliver you from, but this cloſing with forgiveneſs. For,

(1.) All that you do without this, however it may pleaſe your minds, or eaſe your conſciences, is not at all

all accepted with God. Unleſs this foundation be laid, all that you do is loſt. All your prayers, all your duties, all your amendments are an abomination unto the Lord; until peace is made with him, they are but the acts of enemies, which he deſpiſeth and abhorreth. You run it may be earneſtly, but you run out of the way; you ſtrive, but not lawfully, and ſhall never receive the crown. True goſpel-obedience is the fruit of the faith of forgiveneſs; whatever you do without it, is but a building, without a foundation, a caſtle in the air. You may ſee the order of goſpel-obedience, Eph. ii. 7, 8, 9, 10. The foundation muſt be laid in grace; riches of grace by Chriſt, in the free pardon and forgiveneſs of ſin. From hence muſt the work of obedience proceed, if you would have them to be of God's appointment, or find acceptance with him. Without this, God will ſay of all your ſervices, worſhip, obedience, as he did to the Iſraelites of old, Amos v. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25. I deſpiſe all, reject it all; it is not to him, nor to his glory; Now, if you are under convictions of any ſort, there is nothing you more value, nothing you more place your confidence in, than your duties, your repentance, your amendment, what you do, and what in good time you will be. Is it nothing unto you to loſe all your hopes and all your expectations which you have from hence? To have no other reception with God, than if all this while you had been wallowing in your ſins and luſts? Yet thus it is with you, if you have not begun with God on his own terms; if you have not received the atonement in the blood of his Son; if you are not made partakers of forgiveneſs, if your perſons are not pardoned, all your duties are accurſed.

(2.) This alone will give you ſuch motives and encouragements unto obedience, as will give you life, alacrity, and delight in it. You perform duties, abſtain from ſins, but with heavineſs, fear, and in bondage. Could you do as well without them, as with them, would conſcience be quiet, and hope of eternity hold out, you would omit them for ever. This makes all your obedience burdenſome, and you cry out in your thoughts

with him in the Prophet, *Behold what a wearineſs is it!* the ſervice of God is the only drudgery of your lives, which you dare not omit, and delight not to perform. From this wretched and curſed frame, there is nothing can deliver you, but this cloſing with forgiveneſs. This will give you ſuch motives, ſuch encouragements, as will greatly influence your hearts and ſouls. It will give you freedom, liberty, delight, and chearfulneſs in all duties of goſpel-obedience. You will find a conſtraining power in the love of Chriſt therein; a freedom from bondage, when the Son truely hath made you free. Faith and love will work genuinely and naturally in your ſpirits; and that which was your greateſt burden, will become your chiefeſt joy; 2 Cor. vii. 1. Thoughts of the love of God, of the blood of Chriſt, or the covenant of grace, and ſenſe of pardon in them, will enlarge your hearts, and ſweeten all your duties. You will find a new life, a new pleaſure, a new ſatisfaction, in all that you do. Have you yet ever underſtood that of the wiſe man, Prov. iii. 17. *The ways of wiſdom are pleaſantneſs, and her paths are peace?* Have the ways of holineſs, of obedience, of duties, been ſo unto you? Whatever you pretend, they are not, they cannot be ſo, whilſt you are ſtrangers unto that which alone can render them ſo unto you. I ſpeak unto them that are under the law; would you be free from that bondage, that galling yoke in duties of obedience? Would you have all that you do towards God, a delight and a pleaſantneſs unto you? This, and this alone will effect it for you.

(3.) This will place all your obedience upon a ſure foot of account in your own ſouls and conſciences; even the ſame that is fixed on in the goſpel. For the preſent, all that you do, is indeed but to compound with God for your ſin; you hope by what you do for him, and to him, to buy off what you have done againſt him; that you may not fall into the hands of his wrath and vengeance. This makes all you do to be irkſome. As a man that labours all his days, to pay an old debt, and brings in nothing to lay up for himſelf, how tedi-

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ous and wearisome is his work and labour to him? It is odds but that at one time or other, he will give over and run away from his creditor. So it is in this case, men who have secret reserves of recompensing God by their obedience, every day find their debt growing upon them; and have every day less hopes of making a satisfactory payment. This makes them weary, and for the most part they faint under their discouragements, and at length they fly wholly from God. This way alone will state things otherwise in your consciences; it will give you to see, that all your debts are paid by Christ, and freely forgiven unto you by God. So that what you do is of gratitude or thankfulness, hath an influence into eternity, leads to the glory of God, the honour of Christ in the gospel, and your own comfortable account at the last day. This encourageth the soul to labour, to trade, to endeavour; all things now looking forward unto his advantage.

(4.) Find you not in yourselves an impotency, a disability unto the duties of obedience, as to their performance unto God in an acceptable manner? it may be you are not so sensible hereof as you ought to be. For respecting only or principally the outward part and performance of duties, you have not experience of your own weakness. How to enliven and fill up duties with faith, love, and delight, you know not; and are therefore unacquainted with your own insufficiency in this matter; yet if you have any light, any convictions, (and to such I speak at present) you cannot but perceive and understand, that you are not able in your obedience to answer what you aim at; you have not strength or power for it. Now, it is this faith of forgiveness alone that will furnish you with the ability, whereof you stand in need. Pardon comes not to the soul alone; or, rather Christ comes not to the soul with pardon only. It is that which he opens the door, and enters by; but he comes with a spirit of life and power. And as without him we can do nothing, so through his enabling us we may do all things. Receiving of gos-

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pel forgiveneſs engageth all the grace of the goſpel unto our aſſiſtance.

This is the ſum of what hath been ſpoken, the obedience that you perform under your convictions is burdenſome and unpleaſant unto you; it is altogether unacceptable to God. You loſe all you do, and all that you hope to do hereafter, if the foundation be not laid in the receiving of pardon in the blood of Chriſt. It is high time to caſt down all that vain and imaginary fabric which you have been erecting, and to go about the laying of a new foundation, which you may ſafely and chearfully build upon; a building that will abide for ever.

Again, It is ſuch a way, ſo excellent, ſo precious, ſo near the heart of God, ſo relating to the blood of Chriſt, that the neglect of it will aſſuredly be ſorely revenged of the Lord. Let not men think that they ſhall deſpiſe the wiſdom and love of the Father, the blood of the Son, and the promiſes of the goſpel, at an eaſy rate. Let us in a very few words take a view of what the Holy Ghoſt ſpeaks to this purpoſe. There are three ways whereby the vengeance due to the neglect of cloſing with forgiveneſs or goſpel grace is expreſſed.

(1.) That is done poſitively: *He that believeth not ſhall be* DAMNED, Mark xvi. 16. That is a hard word; many men cannot endure to hear of it. They would not have it named by their good wills, and are ready to fly in the face of him from whoſe mouth it proceeds. But let not men deceive themſelves, this is the ſofteſt word, that mercy, and love itſelf, that Chriſt, that the goſpel, ſpeaks to deſpiſers of forgiveneſs. It is Chriſt who is this legal terrifying preacher; it is he that cries out, *If you believe not, you ſhall be damned;* and will come himſelf *in flaming fire, to take vengeance of them that obey not the goſpel,* 2 Theſſ. ii. 8. This is the end of the diſobedient; if God, if Chriſt, if the goſpel may be believed.

(2.) Comparatively in reference unto the vengeance due to the breach of the law, 2 Cor. ii. 16. We are in the

the preaching of forgiveneſs by Chriſt, unto them that periſh, a ſavour of death unto death, a deep death, a ſore condemnation, ſo Heb. x. 29. *Of how much ſorer puniſhment ſuppoſe ye ſhall he be thought worthy?* Sorer than ever was threatned by the law, or inflicted for the breach of it; not as to the kind of puniſhment, but as to the degrees of it: Hence ariſeth the addition of many ſtripes.

(3.) By the way of admiration at the unexpreſſibleneſs, and unavoidableneſs of the puniſhment due unto ſuch ſinners, Heb. ii. 3. *How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation?* Surely, if there is no way for men to eſcape, they ſhall unavoidably periſh who neglect ſo great ſalvation. So the Holy Ghoſt ſays, 1 Pet. iv. 11. *What ſhall be the end of them that obey not the goſpel?* What underſtanding can reach to an apprehenſion of their miſerable and woful condition? None can, ſaith the Holy Ghoſt; nor can it be ſpoken to their capacity; ah! what ſhall their end be? There remains nothing but a *certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation that ſhall conſume the adverſaries*, Heb. x. 27. A certain fearful expectation of aſtoniſhable things that cannot be comprehended.

And theſe are the enforcements of the exhortation in hand, which I ſhall inſiſt upon. On theſe foundations, on the conſideration of theſe principles, let us now a little confer together, with the words of truth and ſobriety. I ſpeak to ſuch poor ſouls, as having deceived themſelves, or neglected utterly their eternal condition, are not as yet really, and in truth, made partakers of this forgiveneſs. Your preſent ſtate is ſad and deplorable; there is nothing but the woful uncertainty of a dying life between you and eternal ruin. That perſuaſion you have of forgiveneſs, is good for nothing, but to harden you, and deſtroy you; it is not the forgiveneſs that is with God; nor have you taken it up on goſpel grounds or evidences. You have ſtollen painted beads, and take yourſelves to be lawful poſſeſſors of pearls

pearls and jewels. As you are then any way concerned in your own eternal condition, which you are entring into, (and how ſoon you ſhall be engaged in it you know not) prevail with yourſelves to attend a little unto the exhortation that lies before you; it is your own buſineſs that you are entreated to have regard unto.

1. Conſider ſeriouſly what it is you bottom your hopes and expectations upon as to eternity. Great men, and in other things wiſe, are here very apt to deceive themſelves. They ſuppoſe they think and believe much otherwiſe, than indeed they think and believe, as their cry at the laſt day will manifeſt. Put your ſouls a little unto it. Do you all ſeriouſly think of theſe things? Or are you ſo under the power of your luſts, ignorance, and darkneſs, that you neglect and deſpiſe them? Or do you riſe up and ly down, and perform ſome duties, or neglect them with a great coldneſs, remiſneſs, and indifferency of ſpirit, like Gallio not much caring for theſe things? Or do you relieve yourſelves with hopes of future amendment, purpoſing that if you live, you will be other perſons than you are, when ſuch and ſuch things are brought about and accompliſhed? Or, do you not hope well in general upon the account of what you have done, and will do? If any of theſe expreſs your condition, it is unſpeakably miſerable. You ly down and riſe up under the wrath of the great God, who will prevail at laſt upon you, and there ſhall be none to deliver. If you ſhall ſay, Nay, this is not our ſtate; we rely on mercy and forgiveneſs; then let me, in the fear of the great God, entreat a few things yet further of you.

2. That you would ſeriouſly conſider, whether the forgiveneſs you reſt on, and hope in, be that goſpel forgiveneſs which we have before deſcribed? or is it only a general apprehenſion of impunity, though you are ſinners; that God is merciful, and you hope in him, that you ſhall eſcape the vengeance of hell-fire? If it be thus with you, forgiveneſs itſelf will not relieve you. This is that of the preſumptuous man, Deut. xxix. 19.

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goſpel-pardon is a thing of another nature; it hath its ſpring in the gracious heart of the Father, is made out by a ſovereign act of his will; rendered conſiſtent with the glory of his juſtice and holineſs by the blood of Chriſt, by which it is purchaſed in a covenant of grace as hath been ſhewed: If you ſhall ſay, Yea, this is the forgiveneſs we rely upon, it is that which you have deſcribed. Then I deſire further that you would.

3. Examine your own hearts, how you came to have an intereſt in this forgiveneſs, to cloſe with it, and to have a right unto it. A man may deceive himſelf as effectually by ſuppoſing that true riches are his, when they are not, as by ſuppoſing his falſe and counterfeit ware to be good and current; how then come you to be intereſted in this goſpel-forgiveneſs? If it hath befallen you, you know not how, if a lifeleſs, barren, inoperative perſwaſion of it hath crept upon your minds; be not miſtaken, God will come and require his forgiveneſs at your hands, and it ſhall appear that you have had no part, nor portion in it. If you ſhall ſay, Nay, but we were convinced of ſin, and rendered exceeding unquiet in our conſciences, and on that account looked out after forgiveneſs, which hath given us reſt. Then I deſire.

4. That you would diligently conſider, to what ends and purpoſes you have received, and to make uſe of this goſpel forgiveneſs. Hath it been to make up what was wanting, and to piece up a peace in your own conſciences? that whereas you could not anſwer your convictions with your duties, you would ſeek for relief from forgiveneſs. This, and innumerable other ways there are, whereby men may loſe there ſouls, when they think all is well with them, even on the account of pardon and mercy. Whence is that caution of the apoſtle, *Looking diligently leſt any one ſhould ſeem to fail, or come ſhort of the grace of God,* Heb. xii. 15. Men miſs it and come ſhort of it, when they pretend themſelves to be in purſuit of it; yea to have overtaken and poſſeſſed it. Now, if any of theſe ſhould prove to be your condition, I deſire.

5. That you would consider seriously, whether it be not high time for you to look out for a way of deliverance, and escape. that you may save yourselves from this evil world, and fly from the wrath to come. The judge stands at the door. Before he deal with you as a judge, he knocks with a tender mercy. Who knows but that this may be the last time of his dealing thus with you? Be you old or young, you have but your season, but your day; it may perhaps be night with you, when it is day with the rest of the world. Your sun may go down at noon; and God may swear that you shall not enter into his rest. If you are then resolved to continue in your present condition, I have no more to say unto you. I am pure from your blood, in that I have declared unto you the counsel of God in this thing, and so I must leave you to a naked trial between the great God and your souls at the last day; poor creatures, I even tremble to think, how he will tear you in pieces, when there shall be none to deliver. Methinks I see poor destitute forlorn souls, forsaken of lusts, sins, world, friends, angels, men, trembling before the throne of God, full of horror, and fearful expectation of the dreadful sentence. Oh that I could mourn over you, whilst you are joined to all the living; whilst there is yet hope, oh that in this your day, you knew the things of your peace!

But now, if you shall say, Nay, but we will seek the Lord whilst he may be found, we will draw nigh unto him before he cause darkness; then consider I pray,

6. What Joshua told the children of Israel, when they put themselves upon such resolution, and cried out, *We will serve the Lord our God*, chap. xxiv. ver. 19. *Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is an holy God, a jealous God, he will not forgive your transgressions, nor your sins.* Go to him upon your own account, and in your own strength, with your own best endeavours and duties, you will find him too great and too holy for you to deal withal. You will obtain neither acceptance of your persons, nor pardon of your sins. But you will say,

ſay, this is heavy tidings. If you ſit ſtill you periſh, and if you riſe to be doing, it will not be better; is there no hope left for your ſouls? muſt we pine away under our ſins and the wrath of God for ever? God forbid. There are yet other directions remaining to guide you out of theſe entanglements. Wherefore,

7. Ponder ſeriouſly on what hath been ſpoken of this way of approaching unto God. Conſider it in its own nature, as to all the ends and purpoſes for which it is propoſed of God: Conſider whether you approve of it or no; Do you judge it a way ſuited and fitted to bring glory unto God? Doth it anſwer all the wants and diſtreſſes of your ſouls? Do you think it excellent ſafe, and glorious unto them who are entered into it? Or have you any thing to object againſt it? Return your anſwer to him in whoſe name, and by whoſe appointment theſe words are ſpoken unto you. If you ſhall ſay, We are convinced that this way of forgiveneſs is the only way for the relief and deliverance of our ſouls. Then,

8. Abhor yourſelves for all your blindneſs and obſtinacy, whereby you have hitherto deſpiſed the love of God, the blood of Chriſt, and the tenders of pardon in the goſpel. Be abaſed and humbled to the duſt, in a ſenſe of your vileneſs, pollutions, and abominations; which things are every day ſpoken unto, and need not here be repeated. And,

9. Labour to exerciſe your hearts greatly with thoughts of that abundant grace that is manifeſted in this way of ſinners coming unto God; as alſo of the excellency of the goſpel wherein it is unfolded. Conſider the eternal love of the Father, which is the fountain and ſpring of this whole diſpenſation; the inexpreſſible love of the Son, in eſtabliſhing and confirming it, in removing all hindrances and obſtructions by his own blood, bringing forth unto beauty and glory this redemption or forgiveneſs of ſin, as the price of it. And let the glory of the goſpel which alone makes this diſcovery of forgiveneſs in God, dwell in your hearts. Let your minds

be exercised about these things. You will find effects from them, above all that hath as yet been brought forth in your souls. What for the most part have you hitherto been conversant about? When you have risen above the turmoyling of lusts and corruptions in your hearts, the entanglements of your callings, business, and affairs, what have you been able to rise your hearts unto? Perplexing fears about your condition, general hopes, without savour or relish, yielding you no refreshment; legal commands, bondage-duties, distracted consciences, broken purposes and promises, which you have been tossed up and down withal, without any certain rest. And what effects have these thoughts produced? Have they made you more holy, and more humble? Have they given you delight in God, and strength unto new obedience? Not at all. Where you were, there you still are, without the least progress: But now, bring your souls unto these springs; and try the Lord if from that day you be not blessed with spiritual stores.

10. If the Lord be pleased to carry on your souls thus far, then stir up yourselves, to choose and close with the way of forgiveness that hath been revealed. Choose it only, choose it in comparison with, and opposition unto all others. Say you will be for Christ, and not for another, and be so accordingly. Here venture, here repose, here rest your souls. It is a way of peace, safety, holiness, beauty, strength, power, liberty, and glory; you have the nature, the name, the love, the purposes, the promises, the covenant, the oath of God; the love, life, death, or blood, the mediation, or oblation and intercession of Jesus Christ. The power and efficacy of the Spirit and gospel grace by him administred, to give the assurance of the excellency, the oneness, the safety of the way, whereunto you are engaging.

If now the Lord shall be pleased to perswade your hearts and souls, to enter upon the path marked out before you, and shall carry you on through the various exercises

exercises of it, unto this closure of faith, God will have the glory, the gospel will be exalted, and your own souls shall reap the eternal benefit of this exhortation.

But now, if notwithstanding all that hath been spoken, all the invitations you have had, and encouragements that have been held out unto you, you shall continue to despise this so great salvation, you will live and die in the state and condition wherein you are; why then, as the prophet said to the wife of Jeroboam, Come near, for I am sent unto you with heavy tidings. I say then,

11. If you resolve to continue in the neglect of this salvation, and shall do so accordingly, then cursed be you of the Lord, with all the curses that are written in the law, and all the curses that are denounced against despisers of the gospel. Yea, be you *Anathema Maranatha;* cursed in this world always, until the coming of the Lord, and when the Lord comes, be ye cursed from his presence into everlasting destruction. Yea, curse them, all ye holy angels of God, as the obstinate enemies of your King and Head, the Lord Jesus Christ; curse them, all ye churches of Christ, as despisers of that love and mercy which is your portion, your life, your inheritance; let all the saints of God, all that love the Lord, curse them, and rejoice to see the Lord coming forth mightily, and prevailing against them to their everlasting ruin. Why should any one have a thought of compassion towards them, who despise the compassion of God? or of mercy towards them, who trample on the blood of Christ? Whilst there is yet hope, we desire to have continual sorrow for you; and to travail in soul for your conversion to God; but if you be hardened in your way, shall we join with you against him? shall we prefer you above all his glory? shall we desire your salvation with the despoiling God of his honour? Nay, God forbid; we hope to rejoice in seeing all that vengeance and indignation, that is in the right hand of God, poured out unto eternity upon your souls,

Prov.

Prov. i. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.

Rules to be obſerved by them who would come to ſtability in obedience.--------The firſt rule.-------- Chriſt the only infallible judge of our ſpiritual condition.-------How he judgeth, by his word and ſpirit.

That which remaineth to be further carried on, upon the principles laid down, is to perſuade ſouls, more or leſs intangled in the depths of ſin, to cloſe with this forgiveneſs by believing, unto their peace and conſolation. And becauſe ſuch perſons are full of pleas and objections againſt themſelves, I ſhall briefly, in what I have to ſay, endeavour to obviate theſe objections, ſo to encourage them unto believing, and bring them unto ſettlement. And herein whatever I have to offer, flows naturally from the doctrine at large laid down and aſſerted. Yet I ſhall not in all particulars apply myſelf thereunto, but in general fix on thoſe things that may tend to the eſtabliſhment and conſolation of both diſtreſſed and doubting ſouls. And I ſhall do what I purpoſe theſe two ways.

Firſt, I ſhall lay down ſuch general rules as are neceſſary to be obſerved by all thoſe who intend to come to goſpel-peace and comfort. And then, *Secondly*, ſhall conſider ſome ſuch objections as ſeem to be moſt comprehenſive of thoſe ſpecial reaſonings wherewith diſtreſſed perſons do uſually intangle themſelves.

I ſhall begin with general rules, which through the grace of Chriſt, and ſupplies of his Spirit, may be of uſe unto believers in the condition under conſideration.

RULE

RULE I.

BE not judges of your own condition, but let Chriſt judge. You are invited to take the comfort of this goſpel-truth, That there is forgiveneſs with God. You ſay not for you, ſo ſaid Jacob, *My way is hid from the Lord*, Iſa. xl. 27. and Zion ſaid ſo too, chap. xlix. 14. *The Lord hath forſaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.* But did they make a right judgment of themſelves, We find in thoſe places, that God was otherwiſe minded. This falſe judgment made by ſouls in their entanglements, of their own condition, is oft-times a moſt unconquerable hinderance unto the bettering of it: They fill themſelves with thoughts of their own about it, and on them they dwell, inſtead of looking out after a remedy. Miſgiving thoughts of their diſtempers, are commonly a great part of ſome mens ſickneſs. Many diſeaſes are apt to cloud the thoughts, and to cauſe miſapprehenſions concerning their own nature and danger; and theſe deluſions are a real part of the perſons ſickneſs. Nature is no leſs impaired and weakned by them, the efficacy of remedies no leſs obſtructed, than by any other real diſtemper. In ſuch caſes we perſuade men to acquieſce in the judgment of their ſkilful phyſician, not always to be waſting themſelves in and by their own tainted imaginations, and ſo deſpond upon their own miſtakes; but to reſt in what is informed them by him, who is acquainted with the cauſes and tendency of their indiſpoſition better than themſelves. It is oft-times one part of the ſouls depths, to have falſe apprehenſions of its condition. Sin is a madneſs, Eccleſ. ix. 3. So far as one is under the power of it, he is under the power of madneſs. Madneſs doth not ſooner, nor more effectually diſcover itſelf in any way or thing, than in poſſeſſing them, in whom it is, with ſtrange conceits and apprehenſions of themſelves. So doth this madneſs of ſin, according unto his degrees and prevalency. Hence ſome cry,

cry, Peace, peace, when ſudden deſtruction is at hand, 1 Theſſ. v. 3. It is that madneſs, under whoſe power they are, which gives them ſuch groundleſs imaginations of themſelves, and their own condition. And ſome ſay they are loſt for ever, when God is with them.

Do you then your duty, and let Chriſt judge of your ſtate. Your concernment is too great, to make it a reaſonable demand, to commit the judgment of your condition to any other. When eternal welfare or woe are at the ſtake, for a man to renounce his own thoughts, to give up himſelf implicitely, to the judgment of men fallible and liars like himſelf, is ſtupidity; but there is no danger of being deceived by the ſentence of Chriſt. The truth is, whether we will or no, he will judge; and according as he determines, ſo ſhall things be found at the laſt day, John v. 22. *The Father judgeth no man*, (that is, immediately and in his own Perſon, *but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.* All judgment that reſpects eternity, whether it be to be paſſed in this world, or in that to come, is committed unto him. Accordingly, that place he judgeth both of things and perſons. Things he determines upon, verſe 24. *He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that ſent me, hath everlaſting life, and ſhall not come into condemnation, but is paſſed from death unto life.* Let men ſay what they pleaſe, this ſentence ſhall ſtand; faith and eternal life are inſeparably conjoined. And ſo of perſons, verſe 38. *You have not*, (ſaith he to the Phariſees, who were much otherwiſe minded) *the word of God abiding in you.*

Take not then the office and prerogative of Chriſt out of his hand, by making a judgment upon your own reaſonings and concluſions, and deductions of your ſtate and condition. You will find that he oftentimes, both on the one hand and on the other, determines quite contrary to what men judge of themſelves; as alſo to what others judge of them. Some he judgeth to be in an evil condition, who are very confident that it is well with them, and who pleaſe themſelves in the thoughts of

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many to the ſame purpoſe: And he judgeth the ſtate of ſome to be good, who are diffident in themſelves, and it may be deſpiſed by others. We may ſingle out an example or two in each kind.

1. Laodicea's judgment of herſelf, and her ſpiritual ſtate we have, Rev. iii. 17. *I am rich and increaſed with goods, and have need of nothing.* A fair ſtate it ſeems, a bleſſed condition: She wants nothing that may contribute to her reſt, peace, and reputation; ſhe is orthodox, and numerous, and flouriſhing; makes a fair profeſſion, and all is well within. So ſhe believes, ſo ſhe reports of herſelf; wherein there is a ſecret reflection alſo upon others whom ſhe deſpiſeth. Let them ſhift as they liſt, I am thus as I ſay. But was it ſo with her indeed? was that her true condition, whereof ſhe was ſo perſuaded, as to profeſs it unto all? Let Jeſus Chriſt be heard to ſpeak in this cauſe, let him come and judge? I will do ſo, ſaith he, verſe 14. *Thus ſaith the Amen, the faithful and true Witneſs.* Coming to give ſentence in a caſe of this importance, he gives himſelf this title, that we may know his word is to be acquieſced in. Every man, ſaith he, is a liar; their teſtimony is of no value, let them pronounce what they will of themſelves, or of one another; *I am the Amen*, and I will ſee whoſe word ſhall ſtand, mine or theirs. What then ſaith he of Laodicea? *Thou art wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* O woeful and ſad diſappointment: O dreadful ſurpriſal! Ah how many Laodicean churches have we in the world? How many profeſſors are members of theſe churches? Not to mention the generality of men that live under the means of grace, all which have good hopes of their eternal condition, whilſt they are deſpiſed and abhorred by the only Judge. Among profeſſors themſelves, it is dreadful to think how many will be found light when they come to be weighed in this balance.

2. Again, he judgeth ſome to be in a good condition, be they themſelves never ſo diffident, Rev. ii. 9. ſaith he to the church of Smyrna, *I know thy poverty;* Smyr-

na was complaining that ſhe was a poor contemptible congregation, not fit for him to take any notice of. Well ſaith he, fear not; I know thy poverty whereof thou complaineſt; but thou art rich; that is my judgment, teſtimony, and ſentence concerning thee and thy condition. Such will be his judgment at the laſt day, when both thoſe on the one hand and the other, ſhall be ſurpriſed with his ſentence; the one with joy at the riches of his grace, the other with terror at the ſeverity of his juſtice, Matth. xxv. 37, 38, 39, and 44, 45. This caſe is directly ſtated in both the places mentioned in the entrance of this diſcourſe; as in that for inſtance, Iſa. xlix. 14. *Zion ſaid, the Lord hath forſaken me.* That is Zion's judgment of herſelf, and her ſtate and condition; a ſad report and concluſion: But doth Chriſt agree with Zion in this ſentence? The next verſe gives us his reſolution of this matter; *Can*, ſaith he, *a woman forget her ſucking child, that ſhe ſhould not have compaſſion on the ſon of her womb; yea they may forget, yet will not I forget thee.* The ſtate of things in truth is as much otherwiſe as can poſſibly be thought or imagined.

To what purpoſe is it for a man to be paſſing a judgment upon themſelves, when there is no manner of certainty in their determinations; and when there proceeding thereon will probably lead them to further entanglements, if not to eternal ruin. The judging of ſouls as to their ſpiritual ſtate and condition is the work of Jeſus Chriſt; eſpecially as to the end now under enquiry. Men may, men do take many ways to make a judgment of themſelves: Some do it on ſlight and trivial conjectures; ſome on bold and wicked preſumptions; ſome on deſperate atheiſtical notions, as Deut. xxix. 17. ſome with more ſobriety and ſenſe of eternity, lay down principles, it may be good and true in themſelves; from them they draw concluſions, arguing from one thing unto another; and in the end oft-times either deceive themſelves, or ſit down no leſs in the dark, than they were at the entrance of their ſelf-debate and examination.

tion. A man's judgment upon his own reaſonings is ſeldom true, more ſeldom permanent. I ſpeak not of ſelf-examination, with a due diſcuſſion of graces and actions, but of the final ſentence as to ſtate and condition, wherein the ſoul is to acquieſce. This belongs unto Chriſt.

Now, there are two ways whereby the Lord Jeſus Chriſt gives forth his decretory ſentence in this matter.

1. By his word. He determines in the word of the goſpel of the ſtate and condition of all men indefinitely. Each individual coming to that word, receives his own ſentence and doom; he told the Jews that Moſes accuſed them, John v. 45. his law accuſed and condemned the tranſgreſſors of it. And ſo doth he acquit every one that is diſcharged by the word of the goſpel. And our ſelf-judging is but our receiving by faith his ſentence in the word. His proceſs herein we have recorded, Job xxxiii. 22, 23. *His ſoul*, (that is of the ſinner) *draweth near to the grave, and his life to the deſtroyers*; this ſeems to be his ſtate; it is ſo indeed; he is at the very brink of the grave and hell. What then: why, if there be with him, or ſtand over him, in the (Heb.) the angel interpreting, or the angel of the covenant, who alone is in the (Heb.) the one of a thouſand; what ſhall he do? He ſhall ſhew unto him his uprightneſs. He ſhall give unto him a right determination of his intereſt in God, and of the ſtate and frame of his heart towards God; whereupon God ſhall ſpeak peace unto his ſoul, and deliver him from his entanglements, verſe 24. Jeſus Chriſt hath, in the word of the goſpel, ſtated the condition of every man. He tells us, that ſinners of what ſort ſoever they are, that believe, are accepted with him, and ſhall receive forgiveneſs from God, that none ſhall be refuſed or caſt off that come to God by him. The ſoul, of whom we are treating, is now upon the work of coming unto God for forgiveneſs by Jeſus Chriſt. Many and weighty objections it hath in and againſt itſelf, why it ſhould not come.

why it shall not be accepted. Our Lord Jesus, the wisdom of God, foresaw all these objections; he foreknew what could be said in the case, and yet he hath determined the matter, as hath been declared. In general, mens arguings against themselves arise from sin and the law. Christ knows what is in them both. He tried them to the uttermost, as to their penalties; and yet he hath so determined as we have shewed. Their particular objections are from particular considerations of sin; their greatness, their number, their aggravations, Christ knows all these also; and yet stands to his firmer determination. Upon the whole matter then, it is meet his word should stand. I know when a soul brings itself to be judged by the word of the gospel, it doth not always in a like manner receive and rest in the sentence given. But when Christ is pleased to speak the word with power to men, they shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and be concluded by it. Let the soul then that is rising out of depths, and pressing towards a sense of forgiveness, lay itself down before the word of Christ in the gospel. Let him attend to what he speaks; and if for a while it hath not power upon him to quiet his heart, let him wait a season, and light shall arise unto him out of darkness. Christ will give in his sentence into his conscience with that power and efficacy, as he shall find rest and peace in it.

2. Christ also judgeth by his Spirit; not only in making this sentence of the gospel to be received effectually in the soul, but in and by peculiar actings of his upon the heart and soul of a believer, 1 Cor. ii. 11. *We have received the Spirit of God, that we may know the things that are freely given us of God.* The Spirit of Christ acquaints the soul, that this and that grace is from him, that this or that duty was performed in his strength. He brings to mind, what at such and such times was wrought in men by himself, to give them supportment and relief in the times of depths and darkness. And when it hath been clearly discovered unto the soul at any time by the Holy Ghost, that any thing wrought in

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it, or done by it, hath been truely ſaving; the comfort of it will abide in the midſt of many ſhakings and temptations.

3. He alſo by his Spirit bears witneſs with our ſpirits, as to our ſtate and condition. Of this I have ſpoken largely elſewhere, and therefore ſhall now paſs it by.

This then is our firſt general rule and direction. Self-determinations concerning mens ſpiritual ſtate and condition, becauſe their minds are uſually influenced by their diſtempers, are ſeldom right, and according to rule. Miſtakes in ſuch determinations are exceedingly prejudicial to a ſoul ſeeking out after relief, and ſenſe of forgiveneſs; let Chriſt then be the judge in this caſe by his word and Spirit, as hath been directed.

RULE II.

Self-condemnation and abhorrency for ſin conſiſtent with goſpel juſtification and peace.------The nature of goſpel aſſurance.------What is conſiſtent with it.------What are the effects of it.

Self-condemnation and abhorrency do very well conſiſt with goſpel juſtification and peace. Some men have no peace, becauſe they have that, without which it is impoſſible they ſhould have peace; becauſe they cannot but condemn themſelves, they cannot entertain a ſenſe that God doth acquit them. But this is the myſtery of the goſpel, which unbelief is a ſtranger unto; nothing but faith can give a real ſubſiſtence unto theſe things, in the ſame ſoul, at the ſame time. It is eaſy to learn the notion of it, but it is not eaſy to experience the power of it. For a man to have a ſight of that within him, which would condemn him, for which he is troubled, and at the ſame time to have a diſcovery of that without him, which will juſtify him, and to rejoice therein, is that which he is not lead unto, but by faith

faith in the mystery of the gospel. We are now under a law for justification, which excludes all boasting, Rom. iii. 27. So that though we have joy enough in another, yet we may have, we always have sufficient cause of humiliation in ourselves. The gospel will teach a man to feel sin, and believe righteousness at the same time. Faith will carry heaven in one hand, and hell in the other; shewing the one deserved, the other purchased. A man may see enough of his own sin and folly to bring *Gehennam e cœlo*, a hell of wrath out of heaven; and yet see Christ bring *cœlum ex inferno*, a heaven of blessedness out of an hell of punishment: And these must needs produce very divers, yea contrary effects and operations in the soul. And he who knows not how to assign them their proper duties and seasons, must needs be perplexed. The work of self-condemnation then, which men in these depths cannot but abound with, is in the disposition of the covenant of grace, no way inconsistent with, nor unsuited unto justification, and the enjoyment of peace in the sense of it. There may be a deep sense of sin on other considerations besides hell. David was never more humbled for sin, than when Nathan told him it was forgiven; and there may be a view of hell as deserved, which yet the soul may know itself freed from as to the issue.

To evidence our intendment in this discourse, I shall briefly consider what we intend by gospel assurance of forgiveness, that the soul may not be solicitous and perplexed, about the utter want of that, which perhaps it is already in some enjoyment of.

Some men seem to place gospel assurance in an high unassaulted confidence of acceptance with God; they think it is in none but such, as, if a man should go to them, and ask them, Are you certain you shall be saved? have boldness, and confidence, and ostentation to answer presently, yea, they are certain, they shall be saved: But, as the blessed truth of assurance hath been reproached in the world under such a notion of it, so such expressions become not them who know what it is

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to have to do with the holy God, who is a conſuming fire. Hence ſome conclude, that there are very few believers who have any aſſurance, becauſe they have not this confidence, or are more free to mention the oppoſition they meet with, than the ſupportment they enjoy. And thus it is rendered a matter not greatly to be deſired, becauſe it is ſo rarely to be obtained; moſt of the ſaints ſerving God, and going to heaven well enough without it: But the matter is otherwiſe. The importance of it, not only as it is our life of comfort and joy, but alſo as it is the principle means of the flouriſhing of our life of holineſs, hath been declared before; and might be further manifeſted, were that our preſent buſineſs; yea, and in times of trial, which are the proper ſeaſons for the effectual working and manifeſtation of aſſurance, it will and doth appear that many, yea, that moſt of the ſaints of God, are made partakers of this grace and priviledge.

I ſhall then in the purſuit of the rule laid down, do theſe two things, *Firſt*, Shew what things they are which are not only conſiſtent with aſſurance, but are even neceſſary concomitants of it, which yet, if not duly weighed and conſidered, may ſeem ſo far to impeach a man's comfortable perſuaſion of his condition before God, as to leave him beneath the aſſurance ſought after. And, *Secondly*, I ſhall ſpeak ſomewhat of its nature; eſpecially as manifeſting itſelf by its effects.

1. A deep ſenſe of the evil of ſin, of the guilt of man's own ſin, is no way inconſiſtent with goſpel aſſurance of acceptance with God through Chriſt, and of forgiveneſs in him. By a ſenſe of the guilt of ſin, I underſtand two things. (1.) A clear conviction of ſin by the Holy Ghoſt, ſaying unto the ſoul, thou art the man; and, (2.) A ſenſe of the diſpleaſure of God, or the wrath due to ſin, according to the ſentence of the law. Both theſe David expreſſeth in that complaint, Pſal. xxxi. 10. *My life is ſpent with grief, and my years with ſighing, my ſtrength faileth becauſe of mine iniquity, and my bones are conſumed.* His iniquity was before him,

him, and a ſenſe of it preſſed him ſore. But yet, notwithſtanding all this, he had a comfortable perſwaſion, that God was his God in covenant, ver. 14. *I truſted in thee, O Lord, I ſaid thou art my God.* And the tenor of the covenant, wherein alone God is the God of any perſon, is, that he will be merciful unto their ſin and iniquity. To whom he is a God, he is ſo according to the tenor of that covenant; ſo that here theſe two are conjoined. Saith he, Lord, I am preſſed with the ſenſe of the guilt of mine iniquities, and thou art my God who forgiveſt them; and the ground hereof is, that God by the goſpel hath divided the work of the law, and taken part of it out of its hand. Its whole work and duty is to condemn the ſin and the ſinner. The ſinner is freed by the goſpel, but its right lies againſt the ſin till that it condemns, and that juſtly. Now, though the ſinner himſelf be freed, yet finding his ſin laid hold of and condemned, it fills him with a deep ſenſe of its guilt, and of the diſpleaſure of God againſt it; which yet hinders not, but that, at the ſame time, he may have ſuch an inſight as faith gives unto his perſonal intereſt in a goſpel acquitment. A man then may have a deep ſenſe of ſin all his days, walk under the ſenſe of it continually, abhor himſelf for his ingratitude, unbelief, and rebellion againſt God, without any impeachment of his aſſurance.

2. Deep ſorrow for ſin is conſiſtent with aſſurance of forgiveneſs; yea, it is a great means of preſervation of it. Godly ſorrow, mourning, humiliation, contriteneſs of ſpirit, are no leſs goſpel graces, and fruits of the Holy Ghoſt, than faith itſelf; and ſo are conſiſtent with the higheſt flouriſhings of faith whatever. It is the work of heaven itſelf, and not of the aſſurance of it, to wipe all tears from our eyes. Yea, theſe graces have the moſt eminent promiſes annexed to them, as, Iſa. lvii. 15. chap. lxvi. 2. with bleſſedneſs itſelf, Mat. ver. 4. yea, they are themſelves the matter of many gracious goſpel promiſes, Zech. xii. 10. ſo that they are aſſuredly conſiſtent with any other grace or priviledge that

that we may be made partakers of, or are promiſed unto us. Some finding the weight and burden of their ſins, and being called to mourning and humiliation on that account, are ſo taken up with it, as to loſe the ſenſe of forgiveneſs, which, rightly improved, would promote their ſorrow, as their ſorrow ſeems directly to ſweeten their ſenſe of forgiveneſs. Sorrow abſolutely excluſive of the faith of forgiveneſs, is legal, and tendeth unto death; aſſurance, abſolutely excluſive of godly ſorrow, is preſumption, and not a perſwaſion from him that calleth us. But goſpel ſorrow, and goſpel aſſurance may well dwell in the ſame breaſt at the ſame time. Indeed, as in all worldly joys, there is a ſecret wound; ſo in all godly ſorrow and mourning, conſidered in itſelf, there is a ſecret joy and refreſhment; hence it doth not wither and dry up, but rather enlarge, open, and ſweeten the heart. I am perſwaded that generally they mourn moſt, who have moſt aſſurance. And all true goſpel mourners will be found to have the root of aſſurance ſo grafted in them, that in its proper ſeaſon (a time of trouble) it will undoubtedly flouriſh.

3. A deep ſenſe of the indwelling power of ſin, is conſiſtent with goſpel aſſurance. Senſe of indwelling ſin will cauſe manifold perplexities in the ſoul. Trouble, diſquietments, ſorrow, and anguiſh of heart, expreſſing themſelves in ſighs, mourning, groaning for deliverance, always attend it. To what purpoſe do you ſpeak to a ſoul, highly ſenſible of the reſtleſs power of indwelling ſin, concerning aſſurance? alas, ſaith he, I am ready to periſh every moment, my luſts are ſtrong, active, reſtleſs, yea outragious; they give me no reſt, no liberty, and but little ſucceſs do I obtain. Aſſurance is for conquerors; for them that live at reſt and peace. I ly groveling on the ground all my days, and muſt needs be uncertain what will be the iſſue. But when ſuch an one hath done all he can, he will not be able to make more woful complaints of this matter than Paul hath done before him, Rom. vii. and yet he cloſeth the diſcourſe of it with as high an expreſſion of aſ-

ſurance as any perſon needs to ſeek after, ver. laſt, and chap. viii. 1. It is not aſſurance, but enjoyment that excludes this ſenſe and trouble. But if men will think they can have no aſſurance, becauſe they have that, without which it is impoſſible they ſhould have any, it is hard to give them relief. A little cruſe of ſalt of the goſpel caſt into theſe bitter waters, will make them ſweet and wholeſome. Senſe of the guilt of ſin may conſiſt with faith of its pardon, and forgiveneſs in the blood of Chriſt. Godly ſorrow may dwell in the ſame heart, at the ſame time, with joy in the Holy Ghoſt; and groaning after deliverance from the power of ſin, with a gracious perſwaſion that ſin ſhall not have *dominion over us, becauſe we are not under the law, but grace.*

4. Doubtings, fears, temptations, if not ordinarily prevailing, are conſiſtent with goſpel aſſurance. Tho' the devils power be limited in reference unto the ſaints, yet his hands are not tied; though he cannot prevail againſt them, yet he can aſſault them: And although there be not an evil heart of unbelief in believers, yet there will ſtill be unbelief in their hearts. Such an evidence, conviction, and perſwaſion of acceptance with God as are excluſive of all contrary reaſons, that ſuffer the ſoul to hear nothing of objections, that free and quiet it from all aſſaults, are neither mentioned in the ſcripture, nor conſiſtent with that ſtate wherein we walk before God, nor poſſible on the account of Satan's will and ability to tempt, or of our own remaining unbelief. Aſſurance encourageth us in our combat, it delivereth us not from it. We may have peace with God, when we have none from the aſſaults of Satan.

Now, unleſs a man do duly conſider the tenor of the covenant wherein we walk with God, and the nature of that goſpel obedience which he requires at our hands, with the ſtate and condition which is our lot and portion while we live in this world; the daily ſenſe of theſe things, with the trouble that muſt be undergone on their account, may keep him in the dark unto himſelf, and hinder

hinder him from that establishment in believing which otherwise he might attain unto. On this account, some as holy persons as any in this world, being wholly taken up with the consideration of these home-bred perplexities, and not clearly acquainted with the way and tenor of assuring their souls before God, according to the rule of the covenant of grace, have passed away their days in a bondage frame of spirit, and unacquaintance with that strong consolation which God is abundantly willing that all the heirs of promise should receive.

5. Evangelical assurance is not a thing that consisteth in any point, and so incapable of variation. It may be higher or lower, greater or less, obscure, or attended with more evidence. It is not quite lost, when it is not quite at its highest. God sometimes marvelously raiseth the souls of his saints with some close and near approaches unto them; gives him a sense of his eternal love; a taste of the embraces of his Son, and the inhabitation of the Spirit, without the least interveening disturbance; then this is their assurance. But this life is not a season to be always taking wages in; our work is not yet done, we are not always to abide in this mount; we must down again into the battle, fight again, cry again, complain again; Shall the soul be thought now to have lost its assurance? Not at all; it had before assurance with joy, triumph, and exaltation; it hath it now, or may have, with wrestling, cries, tears, and supplications: and a man's assurance may be as good as true, when he lies on the earth with a sense of sin, as when he is carried up to the third heaven with a sense of love, and foretaste of glory. In brief, this assurance of salvation is such a gracious evangelical perswasion of acceptance with God in Christ, and of an interest in the promises of preservation unto the end, wrought in believers by the Holy Ghost, in and through the exercise of faith, as for the most part produceth these effects following.

1*st*, It gives delight in obedience, and draws out love in the duties that we do perform unto God. So

much assurance of a comfortable issue of their obedience, of a blessed end of their labours and duties, of their purifying their hearts, and pressing after universal renovation of mind and life, as may make them chearful in them, as may give love and delight in the pursuit of what they are engaged in, is needful for the saints, and they do not often go without it; and where this is, there is gospel assurance. To run as men uncertain, to fight as those that beat the air, to travel as not any way perswaded of a comfortable entertainment or refreshment at the journey's end, is a state and condition that God doth not frequently leave his people unto. And when he doth, it is a season wherein he receives very little of glory from them, and they very little of increase of grace in themselves. Many things, as hath been shewed, do interpose, many doubts arise, and intangling perplexities, but still there is a comfortable perswasion kept alive, that there is a rest provided, which makes them willing unto, and chearful in their most difficult duties. This prevaileth in them, that their labour in the Lord, their watchings, praying, suffering, alms, mortification, fighting against temptation, crucifying the flesh with the lusts thereof, shall not be in vain. This gives them such a delight in their most difficult duties, as men have in a hard journey towards a desirable home, or a place of rest.

2*dly*, It casts out fear, tormenting fear, such as fills the soul with perplexing uncertainties, hard thoughts of God, and dreadful apprehensions of wrath to come: There are three things spoken concerning that fear, which is consistent with the assurance of forgiveness (1.) With respect unto its principle, it is from a spirit of bondage, Rom. viii. 25. *We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear:* It is not such a fear as makes an occasional incursion upon the mind or soul; such as is excited and occasioned by incident darkness and temptation, such as the best and persons of the highest assurance, are liable and obnoxious unto; but it is such as hath a complete abiding principle in the soul, even a spirit

spirit of bondage, a prevailing frame constantly inclining it to fear, or dreadful apprehensions of God and its own condition. (2.) That it tends to bondage, it brings the soul into bondage, Heb. ii. 14, 15. He died to deliver them, who by fear of death were in bondage all their days. Fear of death as penal, as it lies in the curse, which is that fear that proceeds from a spirit of bondage, brings the persons in whom it is into bondage, that is, it adds weariness, trouble, and anxiety of mind unto fear, and puts them upon all ways and means imaginable, unduly and disorderly to seek for a remedy or relief. (3.) It hath torment; fear hath torment, 1 John iv. 18. It gives no rest, no quietness unto the mind; now, this is so cast out with gospel assurance of forgiveness, that though it may assault the soul, it shall not possess it; though it make incursions upon it, it shall dwell, abide and prevail in it.

3*dly*, It gives the soul an hope and expectation of the glory, that shall be revealed, and secretly stirs it up and enlivens it unto a supportment in sufferings, trials and temptations. This is the hope which makes not ashamed, Rom. v. 5. and that because it will never expose the soul unto disappointment. Wherever there is the root of assurance, there will be this fruit of hope. The proper object of it is things absent, invisible, eternal; the promised reward in all the notions, respects, and concernments of it. This hope goes out unto, in distresses, temptations, failings, and under a sense of the guilt and power of sin. Hence arises a spring of secret relief in the soul, something that calms the heart, and quiets the spirit in the midst of many a storm. Now, as wherever assurance is, there will be this hope; so, wherever this secret relieving hope is, it grows on no root, but a living persuasion of a personal interest in the things hoped for.

4*thly*, As it will do many other things; so that I may give one comprehensive instance, it will carry them out, in whom it is, to die for Christ. Death unto men who saw not one step beyond it, was esteemed of all things

things moſt terrible. The way and means of its approach add unto its terror; but this is nothing, in compariſon of what it is unto them who look through it as a paſſage into enſuing eternity. For a man then to chuſe death rather than life, in the moſt terrible manner of its approach, expecting an eternity to enſue, it argues a comfortable perſuaſion of a good ſtate and condition after death. Now, I am perſuaded that there are hundreds, who, upon goſpel ſaving accounts, would embrace a ſtake for the teſtimony of Jeſus, who yet know not at all that they have the aſſurance we ſpeak of, and yet nothing elſe would enable them thereunto. But theſe things beſides the main of my intendment, I ſhall purſue them no further; only the rule is of uſe. Let the ſoul be ſure to be well acquainted with the nature of that which it ſeeks after, and confeſſeth a ſenſe of the want of.

RULE III.

Continuance in waiting neceſſary unto peace and conſolation.--------The fourth rule;--------Remove the hindrances of believing by a ſearching out of ſin.-------Rules and directions for that duty.

Whatever your condition be, and your apprehenſion of it; yet continue waiting for a better iſſue, and give not over through wearineſs or impatience. This rule contains the ſum of the great example given us in this Pſalm. Forgiveneſs in God being diſcovered, though no ſenſe of a particular intereſt therein as yet obtained; that which the ſoul applies itſelf unto, is diligent, careful, conſtant, perſevering, waiting; which is variouſly expreſſed in the 5th and 6th verſes. The Holy Ghoſt tells us, that *light is ſown for the righteous, and gladneſs for the upright in heart,* Pſal. xcvii. 11. Light and gladneſs are the things now required after. Deliverance from darkneſs, miſapprehenſions of God, hard and miſ-

miſgiving thoughts of his own condition, is that which a ſoul in its depths reacheth towards. Now, ſaith the Holy Ghoſt, Theſe things are ſown for the righteous. Doth the husband-man, after he caſts his ſeed into the earth, immediately the next day, the next week, expect that it will be harveſt? Doth he think to reap ſo ſoon as he hath ſown? Or doth he immediately ſay, I have laboured in vain, here is no return, I will pull up the hedge of this field, and lay it waſte; or, I ſee a little graſs in the blade, but no corn, I will give it to the beaſts to devour it? No; his God, as the prophet ſpeaks, inſtructs him unto diſcretion, and teacheth him, namely, what he muſt do, and how he muſt look for things in their ſeaſon: And ſhall not we be inſtructed by him? Behold, *the husbandman*, ſaith James, *waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain*, James v. 7. And is light ſown for them that are in darkneſs, and ſhall they ſtifle the ſeed under the clods, or ſpoil the tender blade that is ſpringing up, or refuſe the watering and dews of the Spirit, that may bring it forth to perfection; Waiting is the only way to eſtabliſhment and aſſurance; we cannot ſpeed by our haſte; yea, nothing puts the end ſo far away, as making too much haſte and ſpeed in our journey. The ground hereof is, that a ſenſe of a ſpecial intereſt in forgiveneſs and acceptance, is given into the ſoul by a mere act of ſovereignty. It is not, it will not be obtained by or upon any rational concluſions or deductions that we can make; all that we can do, is but to apply ourſelves to the removal of hindrances. For the peace and reſt ſought for, come from mere prerogative. *When he giveth quietneſs, who can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who can behold him?* Job xxxiv. 29. Now, what is the way to receive that which comes from mere ſovereignty and prerogative? Doth not the nature of the thing require humble waiting? If then, either impatience caſt the ſoul into frowardneſs, or wearineſs make it ſlothful, which are the two ways whereby waiting

ing is ruined; let not ſuch an one expect any comfortable iſſue of his contending for deliverance out of his depths; and let not any think to make out their difficulties any other way; their own reaſonings will not bring them to any eſtabliſhing concluſions; for they may lay down propoſitions and have no conſiderable objections to lay againſt either of them, and yet be far enough from that ſweet conſolation, joy and aſſurance, which is the product of the concluſion, when God is pleaſed to give it in; yea a man may ſometimes gather up conſolation to himſelf upon ſuch terms, but it will not abide: So did David, Pſal. xxx. 6, 7. He thus argues with himſelf, "He whoſe mountain is made ſtrong, to whom "God is a defence, he ſhall never be moved, nor be "ſhaken; but I am thus ſettled of God, therefore I "ſhall not be moved;" And therein he rejoiceth. It is an expreſſion of exultation that he uſeth; but what is the iſſue of it? In the midſt of theſe pleaſing thoughts of his, God hides his face, and he is troubled; he cannot any longer draw out the ſweetneſs of the concluſion mentioned. It was in him before from the ſhines of God's countenance, and not from any arguings of his own.

No diſappointment then, no tediouſneſs or wearineſs ſhould make the ſoul leave waiting on God, if it intend to attain conſolation and eſtabliſhment. So dealeth the church, Lam. iii. 21. *This I recal to mind, therefore have I hope:* What is it that ſhe calls to mind? This, *that it is of the Lord's mercy that we are not conſumed, becauſe his compaſſions fail not*, verſe 22. I will yet hope, I will yet continue in my expectation upon the account of never-failing compaſſion; of endleſs mercies in him, whatever thy preſent condition be. And thence ſhe makes a bleſſed concluſion, verſe 26. *It is good that a man ſhould both hope, and quietly wait for the ſalvation of the Lord.* And this is our third rule. It is good to hope and wait whatever your preſent condition be, and not to give over, if we would not be ſure to fail; whereunto I

ſpeak

ſpeak no more, becauſe the cloſe of this Pſalm inſiſts wholly on this duty, which muſt be further ſpoken unto.

RULE IV.

Seeing in the courſe of our believing and obedience, that which is chiefly incumbent on us, for our coming up to eſtabliſhment and conſolation, is ſpiritual diligence in the removal of the hindrances thereof; let the ſoul that would attain thereunto, make thorough work in the ſearch of ſin, even to the ſins of youth, that all ſcores on that account may clearly be wiped out. If there be much rubbiſh left in the foundation of the building, no wonder if it always ſhake and totter. Mens leaving of any ſin unſearched to the bottom, will poiſon all their conſolation. David knew this, when in dealing with God in his diſtreſſes, he prays that he would not remember the ſins and tranſgreſſions of his youth, Pſal. v. 7. Youth is oftentimes a time of great vanity and unmindfulneſs of God; many ſtains and ſpots are therein uſually brought upon the conſciences of men; *Childhood and youth are vanity*, Eccleſ. xi. 10. Not becauſe they ſoon paſs away, but becauſe they are uſually ſpent in vanity, as the following advice (of chap. xii. 1.) to remember God in thoſe days, doth manifeſt. The way of many is to wear ſuch things out of mind, and not to walk in a ſenſe of their folly and madneſs, never to make thorough work with God about them. I ſpeak of the ſaints themſelves; for with others that live under the means of grace, whom God intends any way to make uſeful and induſtrious in their generation, this is the uſual courſe; by convictions reſtraining grace, afflictions, love of employment and repute, God gives them another heart than they had for a ſeaſon. Another heart, but not a new heart. Hence another courſe of life, another profeſſion, other actions, than formerly, do flow; with this change they do not content themſelves;

ſelves; they look on what is paſt perhaps with delight, or as things fit enough for thoſe days, but not for thoſe they have attained unto; Here they reſt, and therefore never come to reſt.

But I ſpeak of the ſaints themſelves, who make not ſuch thorough, full, cloſe work in this kind as they ought. An after-reckoning may come in on this hand to their own diſturbance, and an unconquerable hindrance of their peace and ſettlement be brought in, on this account. So was it with Job, chap. xiii. 26. *He makes me poſſeſs the ſins of my youth.* God filled his heart, his thoughts, his mind with theſe ſins; made them abide with him, ſo that he poſſeſſed them; they were always preſent with him: He made the ſins of his youth the ſufferings of his age. And it is a ſad thing, as one ſpeaks, when young ſins and old bones meet together; as Zophar, chap. xx. 11. *His bones are filled with the ſins of his youth.* The joyous frame of ſome mens youth makes way for ſad work in their age. Take heed young ones, you are doing that which will abide with you to age, if not to eternity. This poſſeſſion of the ſins of youth, Job calls, the writing of bitter things againſt him; as indeed it is impoſſible but that ſin ſhould be bitter one time or other. God calls it a *root that beareth gall and wormwood*, Deut. xxix 18. *A root of bitterneſs ſpringing up unto defilement.* Heb. xii. 15. This then is to be ſearched out to the bottom. Iſrael will not have ſucceſs nor peace whilſt there is an Achan in the camp: Neither ſucceſs in temptation, nor conſolation in believing is to be expected, whilſt any Achan, any ſin unreckoned for, lies in the conſcience.

Now, for them who would ſeriouſly accompliſh a diligent ſearch in this matter, which is of ſuch importance unto them, let them take theſe two directions.

Firſt, Let them go over the conſideration of thoſe ſins, and others of the like nature, which may be reduced unto the ſame general heads with them which we laid down before, as the ſins which generally caſt men into

into depths and intanglements. And if they find they have contracted the guilt of any of them, let them not think ſtrange that they are yet bewildered in their condition, and do come ſhort of a refreſhing ſenſe of peace with God, or an intereſt in forgiveneſs; rather let them admire the riches of patience, grace and forbearance, that they are not caſt utterly out of all hopes of a recovery. This will ſpeed an end unto their trouble, according to the direction given.

Secondly, Let them caſt the courſe of their times under ſuch heads and ſeaſons, as may give them the more clear and diſtinct view and apprehenſion of the paſſages in them between God and their ſouls, which may have been provoking unto him. As,

1. For the ſtate of their inward man, let them conſider.

(1.) The unregenerate part of their lives, that which was confeſſedly ſo before they had any real work of God upon their hearts, and therein enquire after two things.

1*ſt*, If there were then any great and ſignal eruptions of ſins againſt God; for of ſuch God requires that a deep ſenſe be kept on our ſouls all our days. How often do we find Paul calling over the ſins of his life and ways before his converſion. I was, ſaith he, *injurious, and a blaſphemer.* Such reflections ought perſons to have on any great provoking occaſions of ſin, that may keep them humble, and neceſſitate them conſtantly to look for a freſh ſenſe of pardon through the blood of Chriſt. If ſuch ſins ly neglected and not conſidered according to their importance, they will weaken the ſoul in its comforts whilſt it lives in this world.

2*dly*, If there were any ſignal intimations made of the good will and love of God to the ſoul, which it broke off from the thorough power of its corruption and temptation, they require a due humbling conſideration all our days; but this hath been before ſpoken unto.

(2) In that part of our lives, which upon the call of God we have given up unto him. There are two ſorts of ſins that do effectually impeach our future peace and comfort, which ought therefore to be frequently renewed and iſſued in the blood of Chriſt. 1. Such as by reaſon of any aggravating circumſtances have been accompanied with ſome eſpecial unkindneſs towards God. Such are ſins after warnings, communications of a ſenſe of love, after particular engagements againſt them, relapſes, omiſſions of great opportunities, and advantages for the furtherence of the glory of God in the world. Theſe kinds of ſins have much unkindneſs attending them, and will be ſearched out if we cover them. 2. Sins attending with ſcandal towards fewer, or more, or any one ſingle perſon who is or may be concerned in us: The aggravations of theſe kind of ſins are commonly known.

(3.) The various outward ſtates and conditions which we have paſſed through, as proſperity and afflictions, ſhould in like manner fall under this ſearch and conſideration. It is but ſeldom that we fill up our duty, or anſwer the mind of God in any diſpenſation of providence. And if our neglect herein be not managed aright, they will undoubtedly hinder and interrupt our peace.

RULE V.

The fifth rule.-------Diſtinction between unbelief and jealouſy.-------The ſixth rule.-------Diſtinction between faith and ſpiritual ſenſe.

Learn to diſtinguiſh between unbelief and jealouſy. There is a twofold unbelief. (1.) That which is univerſal and privative, ſuch as is in all unregenerate perſons; they have no faith at all; that is, they are dead men, and have no principles of ſpiritual life. This I ſpeak not of; it is eaſily diſtinguiſhed from any grace, being

being the utter enemy and privation as it were of them all. (2.) There is an unbelief partial and negative, conſiſting in a ſtaggering at, or queſtioning of the promiſes. This is diſpleaſing to God, a ſin which is attended with unknown aggravations, tho' men uſually indulge it in themſelves. It is well expreſſed, Pſal. lxxviii. 19, 20. God had promiſed his preſence to the people in the wilderneſs, to feed, ſuſtain, and preſerve them. How did they entertain theſe promiſes of God? *Can he*, ſay they, *give bread? Can he give fleſh unto his people?* ver. 20. What great ſin, crime, or offence is in this enquiry? Why, ver. 19. this is called ſpeaking againſt God; *They ſpeak againſt God; they ſaid, Can he furniſh a table in the wilderneſs?* Unbelief in queſtioning of the promiſes is a ſpeaking againſt God; a limiting of the Holy One of Iſrael, as it is called, ver. 41. an aſſigning of bounds to his goodneſs, power, kindneſs and grace, according to what we find in ourſelves, which he abhors. By this unbelief we make God like ourſelves; that is, our limiting of him, expecting no more from him, than either we can do, or ſee how it may be done. This you will ſay was a great ſin in the Iſraelites, becauſe they had no reaſon to doubt or queſtion the promiſes of God. It is well we think ſo now; but when they were ſo many thouſand families, that had not one bit of bread, nor drop of water aforehand for themſelves and their little ones, there is no doubt but they thought themſelves to have as good reaſon to queſtion the promiſes, as any one of you can think that you have. We are ready to ſuppoſe, that we have all the reaſons in the world; every one ſuppoſeth, he hath thoſe that are more cogent than any other hath, to queſtion the promiſes of grace, pardon, and forgiveneſs; and therefore the queſtioning of them is not their ſin, but their duty. But pretend what we will, this is ſpeaking againſt God, limiting of him, and that which is our keeping off from ſtedfaſtneſs and comfort.

But now, there may be a jealouſy in a gracious heart concerning the love of Chriſt, which is acceptable un-

to

to him, at leaſt which he is tender toward, that may be miſtaken for this queſtioning of the promiſes by unbelief, and ſo help to keep the ſoul in darkneſs and diſconſolation; this the ſpouſe expreſſeth in herſelf, Cant. viii. 6. *Love is ſtrong as death, jealouſy is cruel as the grave, the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a moſt vehement flame.* Love is the foundation, the root; but yet it bears that fruit which is bitter, although it be wholſome; that which fills the ſoul with great perplexities, and makes it cry out for a nearer and more ſecure admiſſion into the preſence of Chriſt. *Set me*, ſaith the ſpouſe, *as a ſeal upon thy heart, as a ſeal upon thy arms, for jealouſy is cruel as the grave.* I cannot bear this diſtance from thee, theſe fears of my being diſregarded by thee. *Set me as a ſeal on thy heart.*

Now, this ſpiritual jealouſy is the ſolicitouſneſs of the mind of a believer, who hath a ſincere love for Chriſt, about the heart, affection, and good will of Chriſt towards it, ariſing from a conſciouſneſs of its own unworthineſs to be beloved by him, or accepted with him. All cauſeleſs jealouſy ariſeth from a ſecret ſenſe and conviction of unworthineſs in the perſon in whom it is, and an high eſteem of him that is the object of it; or concerning whoſe love and affection any one is jealous. So it is with this ſpiritual jealouſy; the root of it is love, ſincere love, that cannot be quenched by waters, nor drowned by floods, ver. 27. which nothing can utterly prevail againſt, or overcome. This gives the ſoul high thoughts of the glorious excellencies of Chriſt, fills it with admiration of him; theſe are mixed with a due ſenſe of its own baſeneſs, vileneſs and unworthineſs to be owned by him, or accepted with him. Now, if theſe thoughts on the one hand and on the other be not directed, guided, and managed aright by faith, which alone can ſhew the ſoul, how the glory of Chriſt conſiſteth principally in this, that he being ſo excellent and glorious, is pleaſed to love us with love unexpreſſible, who are vile and ſinful; queſtionings about the love of Chriſt, and thoſe attended with much anxiety

anxiety and trouble of mind, will ariſe. Now, this frame may ſometimes be taken for a queſtioning of the promiſes of God, and that to be a defect in faith which is an exceſs of love; or at moſt ſuch an irregular acting of it, as the Lord Chriſt will be very tender towards, and which is conſiſtent with peace and a due ſenſe of the forgiveneſs of ſins. Miſtake not then theſe, one for another, leſt much cauſeleſs unquietneſs enſue in the judgment which you are to make of yourſelves.

But you will ſay, How ſhall we diſtinguiſh between thoſe two, ſo as not cauſeleſly to be diſquieted and perplexed? I anſwer briefly.

1. Unbelief, working in and by the queſtioning of the promiſes of God, is a weakning, diſheartning, diſpiriting thing. It takes off the edge of the ſoul from ſpiritual duties, and weakens it both as unto delight and ſtrength. The more any one queſtions the promiſes of God, the leſs life, power, joy and delight in obedience he hath. For faith is the ſpring and root of all other graces; and according as that thriveth or goeth backwards: ſo do they all. Men think ſometimes, that their uncertainty of the love of God, and of acceptance with him by the forgiveneſs of ſin, doth put them upon the performance of many duties, and they can have no reſt or peace in the omiſſion of them. It may be it is ſo; yea, this is the ſtate and condition with many. But what are theſe duties? And how are they performed? And what is their acceptance with God? The duties themſelves are legal, which denomination ariſeth not from the nature, ſubſtance or matter of them, for they may be the ſame that are required and enjoined in the goſpel, but from the principle from whence they proceed, and the end to which they are uſed. Now theſe in this caſe are both legal, their principle is legal fear, and their end is legal righteouſneſs, the whole attendance unto them, a ſeeking of righteouſneſs as it were by the works of the law; and how are they performed? Plainly, with a bondage frame of ſpirit; without love, joy, liberty, or delight; to quiet conſcience, to

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pacify God, are the things in them aimed at; all in opposition to the blood and righteousness of Christ. And are they accepted with God? Let them be multiplied never so much, he every where testifieth, that they are abhorred by him. This then unbelief mixed with convictions will do. It is the proper way of venting and exercising itself, where the soul is brought under the power of conviction. But as unto gospel obedience in all the duties of it, to be carried on in communion with God by Christ, and delight in him, all questioning of the promises weakens and discourageth the soul, and makes them all wearisome and burdensome unto it.

But the jealousy that is exercised about the person and love of Christ unto the soul, is quite of another nature, and produceth other effects. It chears, enlivens, and enlargeth the soul, stirs up to activity, earnestness, and industry in its enquiries and desires after Christ. *Jealousy*, saith the spouse *is cruel as the grave*, therefore *set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm.* It makes the soul restlessly pant after nearer, more sensible, and more assured communion with Christ; it stirs up vigorous and active spirits in all duties. Every doubt and fear that it ingenerates concerning the love of Christ, stirs up the soul unto more earnestness after him, delight in him, and sedulous watching against every thing that may keep it at a distance from him, or occasion him to hide, withdraw, or absent himself from it.

2. Unbelief that works by questioning of the promises, is universally selfish; it begins and ends in self. Self-love in desires after freedom from guilt, danger and punishment, are the life and soul of it. May this end be attained, it hath no delight in God; nor doth it care what way it be attained. May such persons have any perswasions that they shall be freed from death and hell, be it by the works of the law, or by the observance of any inventions of their own, whether any glory ariseth unto God from his grace and faithfulness or no, they are not solicitous.

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The jealouſy we ſpeak of hath the perſon of Chriſt and his excellency for its conſtant object. Theſe it fills the mind with in many and various thoughts, ſtill repreſenting him more and more amiable, and more deſirable unto the ſoul. So doth the ſpouſe upon the like occaſion, as you may ſee at large, Cant. v. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. Being at ſome loſs for his preſence, for he had withdrawn himſelf, not finding her wonted communion and entercourſe with him, fearing that upon her provocation ſhe might forfeit her intereſt in his love, ſhe falls upon the conſideration of all his excellencies, and thereby the more enflames herſelf unto deſires after his company and enjoyment. And theſe divers things may be thus diſtinguiſhed and diſcerned.

RULE VI.

Learn to diſtinguiſh between faith and ſpiritual ſenſe. This rule the apoſtle gives us, 2 Cor. v. 7. *We walk by faith and not by ſight.* It is the ſight of glory that is eſpecially here intended. But faith and ſenſe in any kind are clearly diſtinguiſhed: That may be believed, which is not felt; yea, it is the will and command of God, that faith ſhould ſtand and do its work, where all ſenſe fails, Eſa. l. 10. And it is with ſpiritual ſenſe in this matter, as it is with natural. Thomas would not believe, unleſs he ſaw the object of his faith with his eyes, or felt it with his hand; but ſaith our Saviour, *Bleſſed are they who believe, and have not ſeen;* who believe upon the teſtimony of God, without the help of their own ſenſe or reaſon. And, if we will believe no more of God, of his love, of grace, of our acceptance with him, than we have a ſpiritual affecting ſenſe of, we ſhall be many times at a loſs. Senſible impreſſions from God's love, are great ſprings of joy, but they are not abſolutely neceſſary unto peace; nor unto an evidence that we do believe.

We will deal thus with the vileſt perſon living; we will believe him whilſt we have the certainty of our ſenſe to ſecure us. And if we deal ſo with God, what is there in our ſo doing, praiſe-worthy? the prophet tells us, what it is to believe, in reſpect of providence, Hab. iii. 17. When there is nothing left outward and viſible to ſupport us, then to reſt quietly on God, that is to believe. So Pſal. lxxiii. 26. And the apoſtle, in the example of Abraham, ſhews us what it is to believe with reſpect unto a ſpecial promiſe, Rom. iv. 18. *Againſt hope, he believed in hope.* When he ſaw not any outward ordinary means for the accompliſhment of the promiſe, when innumerable objections aroſe againſt any ſuch hope as might have reſpect unto ſuch means, yet he reſolved all his thoughts into faithfulneſs of God in the promiſe, and therein raiſed a new hope in its accompliſhment; ſo in hope believing againſt hope.

To clear this matter, you muſt obſerve what I intend by this ſpiritual ſenſe, which you muſt learn to diſtinguiſh faith from; and to know that true faith, intereſting the ſoul in forgiveneſs, may be without it, that ſo you may not conclude unto a real want of pardon, from the want of the refreſhing ſenſe of it.

Grace in general may be referred unto two heads: (1.) Our acceptation with God through Chriſt; the ſame upon the matter with the forgiveneſs of ſin that we are treating of. And (2.) Grace of ſanctification from God in Chriſt; Of each of theſe there is a ſpiritual ſenſe or experience to be obtained; in both diſtinguiſhed from faith that gives us a real intereſt in forgiveneſs.

Of the firſt, or the ſpiritual ſenſe that we have of acceptance with God, there are ſundry parts or degrees; As, 1. Hereunto belongs peace with God, Rom. v. 1. *Being juſtified by faith, we have peace with God.* This peace is reſt and compoſure of the ſoul emerging out of troubles, upon the account of the reconciliation and friendſhip made for it by the blood of Chriſt: And it hath, as all peace hath, two parts; (1.) A freedom from

from war, trouble, and diſtreſs; and, (2.) Reſt, ſatisfaction and contentment in the condition attained. And this, at leaſt the ſecond part of it, belongs unto the ſpiritual ſenſe that we enquire after. Again, there is in it joy in the Holy Ghoſt, called *joy unſpeakable, and full of glory*, 1 Pet. i. 8. as alſo *glorying in the Lord*, upon the account of his grace, Eſa. lxv. 26. with many the like effects, proceeding from a ſhedding abroad of the love of God in our hearts, Rom. v. 5.

Yea, you ſay theſe are the things you aim at; theſe are the things you would attain, and be filled withal. It is this peace, this joy, this glorying in the Lord, that you would always be in the poſſeſſion of; I ſay you do well to deſire them, to ſeek and labour after them; they are purchaſed by Chriſt for believers: But you will do well to conſider under what notion you do deſire them. If you look on theſe things as belonging to the eſſence of faith, without which you can have no real intereſt in forgiveneſs, or acceptance with God, you greatly deceive your own ſouls, and put yourſelves out of the way of obtaining of them. Theſe things are not believing, nor adequate effects of it, ſo as immediately to be produced where-ever faith is: But they are ſuch conſequents of it, as may, or may not, enſue upon it, according to the will of God. Faith is a ſeed that contains them virtually; and out of which they may be, in due time, educed by the working of the word and ſpirit. And the way for any ſoul to be made partaker of them, is to wait on the ſovereignty of God's grace, who createth peace in the exerciſe of faith upon the promiſes. He then that would place believing in theſe things, and will not be perſwaded that he doth believe, until he is poſſeſſed of them; he doth both loſe the benefit, advantage, and comfort of what he hath, and neglecting the due acting of faith, puts himſelf out of the way of attaining what he aimeth at.

Theſe things therefore are not needful to give you a real, ſaving intereſt in forgiveneſs, as it is tendered in the promiſe of the goſpel by the blood of Chriſt.

And it may be it is not the will of God, that ever you ſhould be entruſted with them. It may be, it would not be for your good and advantage ſo to be. Some ſervants that are ill husbands, muſt have their wages kept for them to the year's end, or it will do them no good. It may be ſome would be ſuch ſpend-thrifts of ſatisfying peace and joy, and be ſo diverted by them from attending unto ſome neceſſary duties, as of humiliation, mortification, and ſelf-abaſement, without which their ſouls cannot live, that it would not be much to their advantage to be entruſted with them. It is from the ſame care and love, that peace and joy are detained from ſome believers, and granted unto others.

You are therefore to receive forgiveneſs by a pure act of believing, in the way and manner before at large deſcribed; and do not think that it is not in you, unleſs you have conſtantly a ſpiritual ſenſe of it in your hearts. See in the mean time that your faith bringeth forth obedience, and God in due time will cauſe it to bring forth peace.

The like may be ſaid concerning the other head of grace; though it be not ſo direct unto our purpoſe, yet tending alſo to the relief of the ſoul in its depths. This is the grace that we have from God in Chriſt for our ſanctification: When the ſoul cannot find this in himſelf, when he hath not a ſpiritual ſenſe and experience of its inbeing and power, when it cannot evidently diſtinguiſh it from that which is not right or genuine; it is filled with fears and perplexities, and it is yet in its ſin. He is ſo indeed who hath no grace in him; but not he always who can find none in him: But theſe are different things. A man may have grace, and yet not have it at ſome times much acting; he may have grace for life, when he hath it not for fruitfulneſs and comfort, though it be his duty ſo to have it, Rev. iii. 2. 2 Tim. i. 6. And a man may have grace acting in him, and yet not know, not be ſenſible, that he hath acting grace. We ſee perſons frequently under great temptations, of apprehenſion that they have no grace at all

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and yet at the ſame time, to the cleareſt conviction of all who are able to diſcern ſpiritual things, ſweetly and genuinely to act faith, love, ſubmiſſion unto God; and that in an high and eminent manner, Pſal. lxxxviii. Heman complains, that he was free among the dead; a man of no ſtrength, ver. 4, 5. as one that had no ſpiritual life, no grace. This afflicted his mind, and almoſt deſtracted him, ver. 15. and yet there can be no greater expreſſions of faith and love to God, than are mixed with his complaints.

Theſe things I ſay then, are not to be judged of by ſpiritual ſenſe, but we are to live by faith about them. And no ſoul ought to conclude, that becauſe it hath not the one, it hath not the other; that becauſe it hath not joy and peace, it hath no intereſt in pardon and forgiveneſs.

RULE VII.

The ſeventh rule.--------Mix not foundation and build-work together.---------The eighth.--------Spend not time in heartleſs complaints, *&c.*

Mix not too much foundation and building work together. Our foundation in dealing with God, is Chriſt alone, mere grace and pardon in him.

Our building is in and by holineſs and obedience, as the fruits of that faith by which we have received the atonement: And great miſtakes there are in this matter which bring great intanglements on the ſouls of men. Some are all their days laying of the foundation, and are never able to build upon it unto any comfort to themſelves, or uſefulneſs unto others; and the reaſon is, becauſe they will be mixing with the foundation, ſtones that are fit only for the following building. They will be bringing their obedience, duties, mortification of ſin, and the like, unto the foundation. Theſe are precious ſtones to build with, but unmeet to be firſt laid, to bear upon

upon them the whole weight of the building. The foundation is to be laid, as was ſaid, in mere grace, mercy, pardon in the blood of Chriſt. This the ſoul is to accept of, and to reſt in merely as it is grace, without the conſideration of any thing in it ſelf, but that it is ſinful and obnoxious unto ruin: This it finds a difficulty in, and would gladly have ſomething of its own to mix with it: It cannot tell how to fix theſe foundation-ſtones without ſome cement of its own endeavours and duty; and becauſe theſe things will not mix, they ſpend a fruitleſs labour about it all their days. But if the foundation be of grace, it is not at all of works; for otherwiſe grace is no more grace. If any thing of our own be mixed with grace in this matter, it utterly deſtroys the nature of grace; which, if it be not alone, it is not at all. But doth not this tend to licentiouſneſs? doth not this render obedience, holineſs, duties, mortification of ſin, and good works, needleſs? God forbid; yea, this is the only way to order them aright unto the glory of God. Have we nothing to do but to lay the foundation? Yes, all our days we are to build upon it, when it is ſurely and firmly laid: And theſe are the means and ways of our edification. This then is the ſoul to do who would come to peace and ſettlement. Let it let go all former endeavours, if it have been engaged unto any of that kind; and let it alone receive, admit of and adhere to mere grace, mercy, and pardon, with a full ſenſe that in it ſelf it hath nothing for which it ſhould have an intereſt in them, but that all is of mere grace through Jeſus Chriſt. *Another foundation can no man lay.* Depart not hence until this work be well over. Surceaſe not an earneſt endeavour with your own hearts, to acquieſce in this righteouſneſs of God, and to bring your ſouls unto a comfortable perſuaſion, that God for Chriſt his ſake hath freely forgiven you all your ſins. Stir not hence until this be effected. If you have been engaged in another way, that is to ſeek for an intereſt in the pardon of ſin by ſome endeavours of your own, it is not unlikely but that you are filled with the fruit of your

your own doings; that is, that you go on with all kind of uncertainties, and without any kind of conſtant peace. Return then again hither; bring this foundation work to a bleſſed iſſue in the blood of Chriſt, and when that is done, up and be doing.

You know how fatal and ruinous it is for ſouls to abuſe the grace of God, and the apprehenſion of the pardon of ſins in the courſe of their obedience, to countenance themſelves in ſin, or the negligence of any duty; this is to turn the grace of God into wantonneſs, as we have elſewhere at large declared. And it is no leſs pernicious to bring the duties of our obedience, any reſerves for them, any hopes about them, into the matter of pardon and forgiveneſs, as we are to receive them from God. But theſe things, as they are diſtinct in themſelves, ſo they muſt be diſtinctly managed in the ſoul; and the confounding of them, is that which diſturbs the peace, and weakens the obedience of many. In a confuſed manner they labour to keep up a life of grace and duty, which will be in their places conjoined, but not mixed or compounded.

Firſt to take up mercy, pardon, and forgiveneſs abſolutely on the account of Chriſt, and then to yield all obedience in the ſtrength of Chriſt, and for the love of Chriſt, is the life of a believer, Eph. ii. 8, 9, 10.

RULE VIII.

Take heed of ſpending time in complaints, when vigorous actings of grace are your duty. Fruitleſs and heartleſs complaints, bemoanings of themſelves and their condition, is the ſubſtance of the profeſſion that ſome make. If they can object againſt themſelves, and form complaints out of their conditions, they ſuppoſe they have done their duty. I have known ſome who have ſpent a good part of their time in going up and down from one to another with their objections and complaints.

plaints. These things are contrary to the life of faith. It is good indeed, in our spiritual distresses, to apply ourselves unto them who are furnished with the tongue of the learned, to know how to speak a word in season unto him that is weary: But for persons to fill their minds and imaginations with their own objections and complaints, not endeavouring to mix the words that are spoken for their relief and direction with faith, but going on still in their own way, this is of no use or advantage; and yet some, I fear, may please themselves in such course, as if it had somewhat of eminency in religion in it.

Others, it may be, drive the same trade in their thoughts, although they make not outwardly such complaints. They are conversant, for the most part, with heartless despondings; and in some they are multiplied by their natural constitutions or distempers. Examples of this kind occur unto us every day. Now, what is the advantage of these things? What did Zion get when she cried, *The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me?* or Jacob when said, *My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?* Doubtless they did prejudice themselves. How doth David rouse up himself, when he found his mind inclinable unto such a frame? For having said, *Why dost thou cast me off, O God? why go I mourning because of the oppression of mine enemy?* He quickly rebukes and recollects himself, saying, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God,* Psal. xliii. 2, 5.

We must say then unto such heartless complainers, as God did to Joshua, *Get you up, why lye you thus upon your face?* Do you think to mend your condition by wishing it better, or complaining it is so bad? are your complaints of want of an interest in forgiveness, a sanctified means to obtain it? Not at all! You will not deal so with yourselves in things natural or civil. In such things you will take an industrious course for a remedy, or for relief. In things of the smallest importance in this

this world, and unto this life, you will not content yourselves with wishing and complaining; as though industry in the use of natural means, for the attaining of natural ends, were the ordinance of God, and diligence in the use of spiritual means, for the obtaining of spiritual ends, were not.

Do not consult your own hearts only. What is it that the scripture calls for in your condition? Is it not industry and activity of spirit? And what doth the nature of the thing require? Distress that is yet hoped to be conquered, evidently calls for industry and diligence in the use of means for deliverance. If thou art past hope, it avails not to complain; if you are not, why do you give up yourselves to despondencies? Our Saviour tells us, that *the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force*, Matth. xi. 12. It is not of the outward violence of its enemies seeking to destroy it, that our Saviour speaks, but of that spiritual fervency and ardency of mind that is in those who intend to be partakers of it: For βιάζεται, *is taken by force*, Luke xvi. 16. is no more but εὐαγγελίζεται, *is preached;* the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it; pressing into it, and taking by force, are the same thing. There is then a violence, a restless activity and vigour of spirit to be used and exercised for an interest in this kingdom. Apply this to your condition: Are you in depths and doubts, staggering and uncertain, not knowing what is your condition, nor whether you have any interest in the forgiveness that is with God? Are you tossed up and down between hopes and fears, want of peace, consolations and establishment? Why lye you upon your faces? Get up, watch, pray, fast, meditate, offer violence to your lusts and corruptions; fear not, startle not at their crying or importunities to be spared; press unto the throne of grace by prayers, supplications, importunities, restless requests: This is the way to take the kingdom of heaven. These things are not peace, they are not assur-

ance, but they are part of the means that God hath appointed for the attainment of them.

What then is the peculiar inſtruction that is proper for ſouls in this condition? That plainly of the apoſtle, 2 Pet. i. 10. *Give all diligence to make your calling and election ſure.* Alas! ſaith the ſoul, I am at no certainty, but rather am afflicted and toſſed, and not comforted; my heart will come to no ſtability; I have no aſſurance, know not whether I am choſen or called: yea, fear that my latter end will be darkneſs and ſorrow: There is, I confeſs, forgiveneſs with God, but juſtly fear that I ſhall never be made partaker of it. What is the uſual courſe that is given in ſuch complaints by them to whom they are made? Moſtly they have a good opinion of them that come with theſe complaints: They judge them to be godly and holy, though much in the dark; if they knew them not before, yet upon theſe complaints they begin to be well perſuaded of them. Hereupon they are moved with pity and compaſſion, and troubled to ſee them in their perplexities, and ſet themſelves to tender relief unto them: They mind them of the gracious promiſes of the goſpel; it may be, fix upon ſome one or more of them in particular, which they explain unto them: Thence they mind them of the abundant grace and tender love of the Father, of the merciful care of our high-prieſt, his readineſs and ability to ſave, his communications of ſuch favours unto them as they perceive not. By ſuch ways and means, by ſuch applications, do they ſeek to relieve them in the ſtate and condition wherein they are. But what is the iſſue? Doth not this relief prove for the moſt part like the morning cloud, and as the early dew; a little refreſhment, it may be, it yields for a ſeaſon, but it is quickly again dried up, and the ſoul left in its heartleſs withering condition.

You will ſay then, Do you condemn this manner of proceeding with the ſouls of men in their doubts, fears, and diſtreſſes? or would you have them pine away under the ſenſe of their condition, or abide in this uncer-

tainty

tainty all their days? I anſwer, No; I condemn not the way, I would not have any left comfortleſs in their depths: But yet I would give theſe two cautions;

1. That ſpiritual wiſdom and prudence is greatly required in this matter, in the adminiſtration of conſolation to diſtreſſed ſouls; if in any thing, the tongue of the ſpiritually learned is required herein, namely in ſpeaking a word in ſeaſon to them that are weary. A promiſcuous drawing out of goſpel-conſolations, without a previous right judgment concerning the true ſtate and condition of the ſouls applied unto, is ſeldom uſeful, oft-times pernicious. And let men take care, how they commit their ſouls and conſciences unto ſuch who have good words in readineſs for all comers.

2. If counſel and conſolation of this kind be given, ſpecial and diſtinct from the advice we are upon of watchfulneſs, diligence, ſpiritual violence in a way of duty; it is exceeding dangerous, and will aſſuredly prove uſeleſs. For let us ſee what counſel the Holy Ghoſt gives in this condition unto them who would make their calling and election ſure, who would be freed from their preſent fears and uncertainties, who complain of their darkneſs and dangers; why, ſaith he, *giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue;* and ſo on, verſe 5. *For,* ſaith he, *if you do theſe things, an entrance ſhall be adminiſtred unto you abundantly into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt,* verſe 11. You who are now in the ſkirts of it, who know not whether you belong unto it or no, you ſhall have an entrance into the kingdom of Chriſt, and all the joy, comforts, conſolations and glory of it, ſhall be richly adminiſtred unto you. This is the advice that the Holy Ghoſt gives in this caſe; and this is the bleſſed promiſe annexed unto the following of this advice: And this the former compaſſionate courſe of adminiſtring conſolation is not to be ſeparated from.

But you will, it may be here ſay, "We are ſo dead "and dull, ſo chained under the power of corruptions "and temptations, that we are not able thus to put

"forth the fruit of a ſpiritual life in adding one grace "unto another." But do you uſe diligence, ſtudy, endeavour all diligence, diligence at all times, in all ways by God appointed, all manner of diligence within and without, in private and public, to this end and purpoſe? Do you ſtudy, meditate, pray, watch, faſt, neglect no opportunity, keep your hearts, ſearch, try, examine yourſelves, fly temptations, and occaſions of cooling, deadning, and ſtifling grace? Do theſe things abound in you? Alas, you cannot do thus, you are ſo weak, ſo indiſpoſed; but alas, you will not, you will not part with your eaſe, you will not crucify your luſts, you will not uſe all diligence; but muſt come to it, or be contented to ſpend all your days in darkneſs, and to lie down in ſorrow.

Thus do men frequently miſcarry. Is it any news for perſons to bewail the folly of their nature and ways in the morning and evening, and yet ſcarce ſtand upon their watch any part of the day, or in any occaſion of the day? Is this giving all diligence? Is this working out our ſalvation with fear and trembling? And may we not ſee profeſſors, even indulging themſelves in ways of vanity, folly, wrath, envy, ſloth and the like, and yet complain at what a loſs they are, how unquiet, how uncertain? God forbid it ſhould be otherwiſe with you; or that we ſhould endeavour to ſpeak peace unto you in any ſuch a frame. To hear of a perſon, that he walks ſlothfully, careleſly, or indulgeth his corruptions, and to find him complaining, that he is at a loſs whether he have any intereſt in pardon or no, to give or tender comfort to ſuch mourners without a due admonition of their duty, to uſe diligence in the uſe of means, for to help on their delivery out of the condition wherein they are, is to tender poiſon unto them.

To this then the ſoul muſt come that is in depths, if it intend to be delivered. Heartleſs complaints, with excuſes to keep it from vigorous ſpiritual diligence, muſt be laid aſide; if not, ordinarily, peace, reſt, and ſtability will not be obtained. A great example hereof we

we have in the ſpouſe, Cant. v. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. She is drouſy and indiſpoſed unto communion with Chriſt, whereunto ſhe is invited, ver. 2. this puts her upon making excuſes from the unfitneſs of the time, and her preſent indiſpoſition and unpreparedneſs as to the duty whereunto ſhe is called, ver. 3. Hereupon Chriſt withdraws his preſence from her, and leaves her at a loſs as to her former comforts, ver. 6. what courſe doth ſhe now take? Doth ſhe now ly down again in her former ſlumber? Doth ſhe make uſe of her former excuſes and pretences, why ſhe could not engage into the duties ſhe was called unto? No ſuch things! But now, with all earneſtneſs, diligence, ſedulity and importunity, ſhe engageth in all manner of duties, whereby ſhe may recover her former comforts, as you may ſee in the text. And this muſt be the courſe of others, who would obtain the ſame ſucceſs. Spiritual peace and ſloth will never dwell together in the ſame ſoul and conſcience.

RULE IX.

The ninth rule.------Take heed of undue expreſſions concerning God, and his ways, in diſtreſs.

Take heed in doubts, diſtreſſes, and perplexities, of hard thoughts of God; haſty unweighed expreſſions concerning him or his ways, with, or of, ſecret reſolves, that it were as good give over waiting, as continue in the ſtate wherein you are, ſeeing your condition is remedileſs.

On three occaſions are ſuch thoughts and reſolves apt to befal the minds of men, which ſometimes break forth into unwarrantable expreſſions concerning God, himſelf and his ways.

1. In deep perplexities of mind, by reaſon of ſome preſſing terror from the Lord.

2. On

2. On the long weariſome continuance of ſome tempting diſtreſs, and hereof we have many examples ſome whereof ſhall be mentioned.

3. In ſpiritual diſappointments through the ſtrength of luſt or temptation. When a perſon hath, it may be recovered himſelf through grace, from a perplexing ſenſe of the guilt of ſome ſin, or it may be from a courſe ſhorter or longer, leſſer or greater, of backſliding and negligent walking with God, and therein goes on chearfully for a ſeaſon in the courſe of his obedience, if this perſon, through the power of temptation, ſubtilty of luſts, neglect of watchfulneſs, by one means or other, is ſurpriſed in the ſins, or ways that he had relinquiſhed; or is turned aſide from the vigour of that courſe wherein he was engaged, he may be expoſed not only to great deſpondencies, but alſo be overtaken with ſecret reſolves to give over contending, ſeeing it is to no more purpoſe, nay, to no purpoſe, and that God regards him not at all.

Take an inſtance or two in each kind.

The firſt we have in Job in the extremity of his trials and terrors from the Lord. See among other places, chap. x. ver. 3. *Is it*, ſaith he to God, *good for thee, that thou ſhouldſt oppreſs, that thou ſhouldſt deſpiſe the work of thy hands?* Ah poor worms, with whom have we to do? Who ſhall ſay unto a king, *Thou art wicked, and to princes, Ye are ungodly?* And will ye ſpeak ſo to him who reſpecteth not the perſons of princes, nor regardeth them more than the pooreſt in the earth; And ſee what concluſions from ſuch thoughts as theſe he doth infer, chap. xiv. 15, 16, 17. *Thou numbereſt my ſteps, doſt thou not watch over my ſin? my tranſgreſſion is ſealed up in a bag, and thou ſoweſt up my iniquity.* He chargeth God to be his enemy, one that watched for all opportunities and advantages againſt him, that ſeemed to be glad at his halting, and take care that none of his ſins ſhould be miſſing when he intended to deal with him. Had this indeed been the caſe with him, he had periſhed unto eternity, as elſewhere he acknowledged.

Of

Of the other, we have an inſtance in the church, Lam. iii. 18. *I ſaid, my ſtrength and my hope is periſhed from the Lord.* Preſent grace in ſpiritual ſtrength, and future expectation of mercy, are all gone. And what is got by this? Secret hard thoughts of God himſelf are hereby ingenerated; as ver. 8. *When I cry and ſhout, he ſhutteth out my prayers.* ver. 44. *Thou haſt covered thyſelf with a cloud, that our prayers ſhould not paſs through.* Theſe things are grievous unto God to bear, and no way uſeful to the ſoul in its condition. Yea, they more and more unfit it for every duty that may ly in a tendency to its relief and deliverance.

So was it with Jonah, chap. ii. 4. *I ſaid I am caſt out of thy ſight;* All is loſt and gone with me, as good give over as contend; I do but labour in vain; periſh I muſt as one caſt out of the ſight of God. The like complaints fell alſo from Heman in his diſtreſs, Pſal. lxxxviii.

The General, who heard one of his ſoldiers cry out upon a freſh onſet of the enemy, Now we are undone, Now we are ruined, called him traitor, and told him it was not ſo, whilſt he could wield his ſword. It is not for every private ſoldier, on every danger, to make a judgment of the battle. That is the work of the General. Jeſus Chriſt is the Captain of our ſalvation, he hath undertaken the leading and conduct of our ſouls through all our difficulties. Our duty is to fight and contend; his work is to take care of the event; and to him it is to be committed.

That then you may make a due uſe of this rule, keep always in your minds theſe two conſiderations.

1. That it is not for you to take the judgment of Chriſt out of his hand, and to be paſſing ſentence upon your own ſouls. Judgment, as to the ſtate and condition of men, is committed unto Chriſt, and to him it is to be left. This we were directed unto in our firſt rule, and it is of ſpecial uſe in the caſe under conſideration. Self-judging in reference unto ſin, and the demerit of it is our duty. The judging of our ſtate and condition

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in relation unto the remedy provided, is the office and work of Jeſus Chriſt, with whom it is to be left.

2. Conſider, that hard thoughts of what God will do with you, and harſh deſponding ſentences pronounced againſt yourſelves, will inſenſibly alienate your hearts from God. It may be, when mens perplexities are at the height, and the moſt ſad expreſſions are as it were wreſted from them, they yet think they muſt juſtify God, and that they do ſo accordingly. But yet ſuch thoughts as thoſe mentioned, are very apt to infect the mind with other inclinations. For after a while they will prevail with the ſoul to look on God as an enemy, as one that hath no delight in it; and what will be the conſequent thereof is eaſily diſcernable. None will continue to love long, where they expect no returns. Suffer not then your minds to be tainted with ſuch expreſſions, as reflect on that infinite grace and compaſſion which he is exerciſing towards you.

RULE X.

The tenth rule.--------Duly improve the leaſt appearances of God in a way of grace or pardon.

If you would come to ſtability, and a comforting perſuaſion of an intereſt in forgiveneſs by the blood of Chriſt, improve the leaſt appearances of him unto your ſouls, and the leaſt intimations of his love in pardon, that are made unto you in the way of God. The ſpouſe takes notice of her husband, and rejoiceth in him, when he ſtands behind the wall, when he doth but look forth at the window, and ſhew himſelf at the lattice, when ſhe could have no clear ſight of him, Cant. ii. 9. She lays hold on the leaſt appearance of him to ſupport her heart withal, and to ſtir up her affections towards him. Men in dangers do not ſit ſtill to wait untill ſomething preſents itſelf unto them that will give aſſured deliverance; but they cloſe with that which firſt preſents itſelf

ſelf unto them, that is of the ſame kind and nature with what they look after. And thus God doth in many places expreſs ſuch ſupportments, as give the ſoul little more than a poſſibility of attaining the end aimed at. As Zeph. ii. 3. *It may be ye ſhall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.* And Joel ii. 14. *Who knoweth but he will return and leave a bleſſing?* It may be we ſhall be hid; it may be we ſhall have a bleſſing. And this was the beſt ground that Jonathan had for the great undertaking againſt the enemies of God, 1 Sam. xiv. 6. *It may be God will go along with us.* And to what end doth God at any time make theſe ſeemingly dubious intimations of grace and mercy? Is it that we ſhould, by the difficulty included in them, be diſcouraged and kept from him? Not at all; he ſpeaks nothing to deter ſinners, eſpecially diſtreſſed ſinners, from truſting in him. But his end is, that we ſhould cloſe with, and lay hold upon, and improve the leaſt appearances of grace, which this kind of expreſſions do give unto us. When men are in a voyage at ſea, and meet with a ſtorm or a tempeſt which abides upon them, and they fear will at laſt prevail againſt them; if they make ſo far a diſcovery of land, as that they can ſay, It may be there is land; it may be it is ſuch a place where there is a ſafe harbour, none can poſitively ſay, it is not; there lies no demonſtration againſt it; in this condition, eſpecially if there be no other way of eſcape, delivery or ſafety propoſed to them, this is enough to make them follow on that diſcovery, and with all diligence to ſteer their courſe that way, until they have made a trial of it unto the utmoſt. The ſoul of which we ſpeak is afflicted and toſſed, and not comforted. There is in the intimation of grace and pardon intended a remote diſcovery made of ſome relief. This may be Chriſt, it may be forgiveneſs. This it is convinced of; it cannot deny but at ſuch or ſuch a time, under ſuch ordinances, or in ſuch duties, it was perſwaded that yet there might be mercy and pardon for it. This is enough to carry it to ſteer its courſe conſtantly that way;

to preſs forward unto that harbour which will give it reſt. How little was it that David had to bring his ſoul unto a compoſure in his great diſtreſs, 2 Sam. xv. 25. *If* ſaith he, *I ſhall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and ſhew me the ark, and the place of his habitation; but if he thus ſay, I have no delight in thee, behold here am I, let him do unto me as ſeemeth good unto him.* He hath nothing but ſovereign grace to reſt upon, and that he gives himſelf up unto.

Faith is indeed the ſoul's venture for eternity. Something it is to venture on, as to its eternal condition. It muſt either adhere unto itſelf, or its own vain hopes of a righteouſneſs of its own; or it muſt give over all expectation, and ly down in darkneſs, or, it muſt ſhut out all dreadful apprehenſions of eternity, by the power and activity of its luſts and carnal affections; or, it muſt, whatever its diſcouragements be, caſt itſelf upon pardon in the blood of Jeſus Chriſt. Now, if all the former ways be deteſtable and pernicious, if the beſt of them be a direct oppoſition unto the goſpel, what hath the ſoul that enquires after theſe things to do, but to adhere unto the laſt, and to improve every encouragement, even the leaſt to that purpoſe.

As a cloſe unto theſe general rules, I ſhall only add this laſt direction: Conſider in particular where the ſtreſs and hindrance lies, that keeps you off from peace through an eſtabliſhed perſwaſion of an intereſt in evangelical pardon. Do not always fluctuate up and down in generals and uncertainties; but drive things unto a particular iſſue, that it may be tried whether it be of ſufficient efficacy to keep you in your preſent intanglements and deſpondencies. Search out your wound, that it may be tried whether it be curable or no.

Now, in this caſe we cannot expect that perſons ſhould ſuggeſt their own particular concerns, that ſo they might be conſidered and be brought unto the rule; but we muſt ourſelves reduce ſuch diſtreſſes, as may, or do, in this matter befal the minds of men, unto ſome general heads, and give a judgment concerning them ac-

according to the word of truth. Indeed particular caſes as varied by circumſtances, are endleſs; nor can they be ſpoken unto in this way of inſtruction and direction, but they muſt be left unto occaſional conſiderations of them, as they are repreſented unto them who are entruſted to diſpenſe the myſteries of God. Beſides, many have laboured already in this matter, and their endeavours are in, and of general uſe. Although it muſt be ſaid, as was before obſerved, that ſpecial caſes are ſo varied by their circumſtances, that it is very rare that any reſolutions of them are every way adequate, and ſuited unto the apprehenſions of them that are exerciſed with them. I ſhall therefore call things unto ſome general heads, whereunto moſt of the objections that diſtreſſed ſinners make againſt their own peace, may be reduced; and leave the light of them to be applied in particular unto the relief of the ſouls of men, as God ſhall be pleaſed to make them effectual.

Second general head, of the application of the truth inſiſted on.------Grounds of ſpiritual diſquietments conſidered.------The firſt, afflictions.------Ways and means of the aggravation of afflictions.------Rules about them.

That which now lieth before us, is the ſecond part of the ſecond general uſe educed from the truth inſiſted on. Our aim is, to lead on ſouls towards peace with God, through a gracious perſwaſion of their intereſt in that forgiveneſs which is with him; and it conſiſts, as was declared, in a conſideration of ſome of thoſe diſquietments which befal the minds of men, and keep them off from eſtabliſhment in this matter.

And, *firſt*, ſuch diſquietments and objections againſt the peace of the ſoul, and its acceptance with God, will ariſe from afflictions; they have done ſo of old, they do ſo in many at this day. Afflictions, I ſay, greatned unto the mind from their nature, or by their concomitants, do oft-times variouſly affect it, and ſometimes prevail

to darken it ſo far, as to engenerate thoughts, that they are all meſſengers of wrath, all tokens of diſpleaſure, and ſo conſequently evidences that we are not pardoned or accepted with God.

Now, this is a time of great affliction unto many, and thoſe, ſome of them, ſuch as have innumerable aggravating circumſtances accompanying of them. Some have come with a dreadful ſurprizal in things not looked for; ſuch as falls not out in the providence of God in many generations: Such is the condition of them who are reduced to the utmoſt extremity by the late conſuming fire; ſome have had their whole families, all their poſterity taken from them; in a few days they have been ſuddenly bereaved, as in the plague. Some in their own perſons, or in their relations, have had ſore, long and grievous trials, from oppreſſions and perſecutions; and theſe things have various effects on the minds of men. Some we find crying with that wicked king, *This evil is of the Lord, why ſhould we wait any longer for him?* and give up themſelves to ſeek relief from their own luſts. Some bear up under their troubles with a natural ſtoutneſs of ſpirit; ſome have received a ſanctified uſe and improvement of their trials, with joy in the Lord. But many we find to go heavily under their burdens, having their minds darkned with many miſapprehenſions of the love of God, and of their own perſonal intereſt in his grace. It is not therefore unſeaſonable to ſpeak a little to this head of trouble in our entrance. Outward troubles, I ſay, are oftentimes occaſions, if not the cauſes of great inward diſtreſſes. You know how the ſaints of old expreſſed their ſenſe of them, and conflicts with them. The complaints of David are familiar to all who attend unto any communion with God in theſe things; ſo are thoſe of Job, Heman, Jonah, Jeremiah, and others; Neither do they complain only of their troubles, but of the ſenſe which they had of God's diſpleaſure in and under them, and of his hiding of his face from them, whilſt they were ſo exerciſed.

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It is not otherwiſe at preſent, as is known unto ſuch as converſe with many, who are either ſurprized with unexpected troubles, or worn out with trials and diſappointments of an expected end. They conſider themſelves both abſolutely, and with reſpect unto others, and on both accounts are filled with dark thoughts and deſpondencies. Saith one, I am rolled from one trial unto another; the clouds with me return ſtill after the rain. All the billows and water ſpouts of God go over me: In my perſon, it may be, preſſed with ſickneſs, pains, troubles; in my relations, with their ſins, miſcarriages, or death; in my outward ſtate, in wants, loſſes, diſ-reputation; I am even as a withered branch. Surely, if God had any eſpecial regard unto my ſoul, it would not be thus with me; or ſome timely end would have been put unto theſe diſpenſations. On the other hand, they take a view of ſome other profeſſors; they ſee that their tables are ſpread day by day; that the candle of the Lord ſhines continually on their tabernacle, and that in all things they have their hearts deſire. Setting aſide the common attendencies of human nature, and nothing befalls them grievous in the world. Thus it is with them. "And ſurely, had I an intereſt in "his grace, in pardon, the God of Iſrael would not "thus purſue a flea in the mountains, nor ſet himſelf "in battle aray againſt a leaf driven to and fro with "the wind; he would ſpare me a little, and let me "alone for a moment; but as things are with me, I "fear my way is hidden from the Lord, and my judg-"ment is paſſed over from my God." Theſe kind of thoughts do perplex the minds of men, and keep them off from partaking of that ſtrong conſolation which God is abundantly willing they ſhould receive, by a comfortable perſwaſion of a bleſſed intereſt in that forgiveneſs that is with him

And this was the very caſe of David; or at leaſt, theſe outward troubles were a ſpecial part of thoſe depths, out of which he cried for relief, by a ſenſe of pardon, grace and redemption with God.

I anſwer

I anſwer to theſe complaints; *Firſt*, that there are ſo many excellent things ſpoken concerning afflictions, their neceſſity, their uſefulneſs, and the like; ſuch bleſſed ends are aſſigned unto them, and in many have been compaſſed and fulfilled by them, that a man unacquainted with the exerciſe wherewith they are attended, would think it impoſſible that any one ſhould be ſhaken in mind, as to the love and favour of God on their account. But, as the apoſtle tells us, that no afflictions are joyous at preſent, but grievous; ſo he who made, in the cloſe of his trials, that ſolemn profeſſion, that it was good for him that he had been afflicted, yet we know, as hath been declared, how he was diſtreſſed under them. There are therefore ſundry accidental things which accompany great afflictions, that ſeem to exempt them from the common rule, and the promiſe of love and grace: As,

1. The remembrance of paſt and buried miſcarriages and ſins lies in the boſom of many afflictions: It was ſo with Job; *Thou makeſt me*, ſaith he, *to poſſeſs the ſins of my youth*. See his plea to that purpoſe, chap. xiii. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27. In the midſt of his troubles and diſtreſſes, God revived upon his ſpirit a ſenſe of former ſins, even the ſins of his youth, and made him to poſſeſs them? he filled his ſoul and mind with thoughts of them, and anxiety about them. This made him fear leſt God was his enemy, and would continue to deal with him in all ſeverity. So was it with Joſeph's brethren in their diſtreſſes, Gen. xlii. 21. *They ſaid one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we ſaw the anguiſh of his ſoul, when he beſought us, and we would not hear, therefore is this diſtreſs come upon us.* And verſe 22. *Behold his blood is required.* Their diſtreſs revives a deep perplexing ſenſe of the guilt of ſin many years paſt before, and that under all its aggravating circumſtances, which ſpoiled them of all their reliefs and comforts, filling them with confuſion and trouble, though abſolutely innocent as towhat was come on them. And the like appeared in the widow of

of Zarephath, with whom Elijah ſojourned during the famine. Upon the death of her ſon, which it ſeems was ſomewhat extraordinary, ſhe cried out unto the prophet, *What have I to do with thee, thou man of God? Art thou come to call my ſins to remembrance, and to ſlay my ſon?* 1 Kings xvii. 18. It ſeems ſome great ſin ſhe had formerly contracted the guilt of, and now upon her ſore affliction in the death of her only child, the remembrance of it was recalled and revived upon her ſoul. Thus deep calleth unto deep at the noiſe of God's water ſpouts, and then all his waves and billows go over a perſon, Pſal. xlii. 7. The deep of afflictions calleth up the deep of the guilt of ſin, and both in conjunction become as billows and waves paſſing over the ſoul. We ſee only the outſide of men's afflictions, they uſually complain only of what doth appear. And an eaſy thing it is ſuppoſed to be, to apply relief and comfort unto thoſe that are diſtreſſed. The rule in this matter is ſo clear, ſo often repeated and inculcated, the promiſes annexed unto this condition ſo many and precious, that every one hath in readineſs what to apply unto them who are ſo exerciſed. But oftentimes, we know nothing of the gall and wormwood that is in men's affliction; they keep that to themſelves, and their ſouls feed upon them in ſecret, Lam iii. 12. God hath ſtirred up the remembrance of ſome great ſin, or ſins, and they look upon their afflictions as that wherein he is come or beginning to enter into judgment with them. And is it any wonder if they be in darkneſs and filled with diſconſolation?

2. There is in many afflictions ſomething that ſeem new and peculiar, wherewith the ſoul is ſurprized, and cannot readily reduce its condition unto what is taught about afflictions in general. This perplexeth and entangleth it. It is not affliction it is troubled withal, but ſome one thing or other in it that appears with an eſpecial dread unto the ſoul, ſo that he queſtioneth whether ever it were ſo with any other or no, and is thereby deprived of the ſupportment which from former examples

examples it might receive. And indeed, when God intendeth that which ſhall be a deep affliction, he will put an edge upon it in matter, or manner, or circumſtances, that ſhall make the ſoul feel its ſharpneſs; he will not take up with our bounds and meaſures, and with which we think we could be contented: But he will put in the impreſs of his own greatneſs and terror upon it, that he may be acknowledged and ſubmitted unto. Such was the ſtate with Naomi; when from a full and plentiful condition, ſhe went into a ſtrange country with an husband and two ſons, where they all died, leaving her deſtitute and poor: Hence in her account of God's dealing with her, ſhe ſays, *Call me not Naomi*, (that is pleaſant) *but call me Mara*, (that is bitter) *for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full and the Lord hath brought me again empty; why then call ye me Naomi, ſince the Lord hath teſtified againſt me; and the Almighty hath afflicted me?* Ruth i. 20, 21. So was it with Job, with the widow of Zarephath, and with her at Naim who was burying her only child. And ſtill in many afflictions God is pleaſed to put in an entangling ſpecialty, which perplexeth the ſoul, and darkens it in all its reaſonings about the love of God towards it, and its intereſt in pardon and grace.

3. In ſome, afflictions are very ſtrong and importunate, as fixed on lawful things; whereby their nature is made ſenſible and tender, and apt to receive very deep impreſſions from urgent afflictions: Now, altho' this in it ſelf be a good natural frame, and helps to preſerve the ſoul from that ſtout hardneſs which God abhors; yet if it be not watched over, it is apt to perplex the ſoul with many intangling temptations. The apoſtle intimates a double evil that we are obnoxious unto under trials and afflictions, Heb. xii. 5. *My ſon, deſpiſe thou not the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.* Men may either, through a natural ſtoutneſs, deſpiſe and contemn their ſufferings, and be obſtinate under them, or faint and deſpond, and ſo come ſhort of the end which God aims at for them,

to

to be attained in a way of duty. Now, though the frame ſpoken of, be not obnoxious unto the firſt extreme, yet it is greatly to the latter, which, if not watched againſt, is no leſs pernicious than the former. Affections in ſuch perſons being greatly moved, they cloud and darken the mind, and fill it with ſtrange apprehenſions concerning God and themſelves. Every thing is preſented unto them through a glaſs, compoſed of fear, dread, terror, ſorrow, and all ſorts of diſconſolations. This makes them faint and deſpond, unto very ſad apprehenſions of themſelves and their conditions.

4. Afflictions find ſome entangled with very ſtrong corruptions, as love of the world, or the pleaſure of it, of name or reputation, of great contrivances for poſterity, and the like; or it may be in things carnal or ſenſual. Now, when theſe unexpectedly meet together, great afflictions and ſtrong corruptions, it is not conceivable what a combuſtion they will make in the ſoul. As a ſtrong medicine or portion meeting with a ſtrong or tough diſtemper in the body; there is a violent contention in nature between them and about them, ſo that oftentimes the very life of the patient is endangered. So it is where a great trial, a ſmart ſtroke of the hand of God, falls upon a perſon in the midſt of his purſuit of the effects of ſome corruptions; the ſoul is amazed even to diſtraction, and can ſcarce have any thought, but that God is come to cut the perſon off in the midſt of his ſin. Every unmortified corruption fills the very fear and expectation of affliction with horror. And there is good reaſon that it ſhould do; for although God ſhould be merciful unto mens iniquities, yet if he ſhould come to take vengeance of their inventions, their condition will be dark and ſorrowful.

5. Satan is never wanting in ſuch occaſions to attempt the compaſſing of his ends, upon perſons that are exerciſed under the hand of God. In the time of his ſuffering it was, that he fell upon the head of the church, turning it into the very hour of the power of darkneſs.

And he will not omit any appearing opportunities of advantage againſt his members: And this is that which he principally in ſuch ſeaſons attacks them withal, namely, that God regards them not, that they are fallen under his judgment and ſeverity, as thoſe who have no ſhare in mercy, pardon or forgiveneſs.

From theſe and the like reaſons, I ſay it is, that whereas afflictions in general are ſo teſtified unto, to be ſuch pledges and tokens of God's love and care to be deſigned unto bleſſed ends, as conformity unto Chriſt, and a participation of the holineſs of God; yet by reaſon of theſe circumſtances, they often prove means of caſting the ſoul into depths, and of hindering it from a refreſhing intereſt in the forgiveneſs that is with God: That this may prove no real or abiding ground of inward ſpiritual trouble unto the ſoul, the following rules and directions may be obſerved.

1. Not only afflictions in general, but great and manifold afflictions, and thoſe attended with all ſorts of aggravating circumſtances, are always conſiſtent with the pardon of ſin, after ſignal tokens and pledges of it, and of the love of God therein, Job vii. 17, 18. *What is man that thou ſhouldſt magnify him, and that thou ſhouldſt ſet thine heart upon him, and that thou ſhouldſt viſit him every morning, and try him every moment!* What were the conſiderations that caſt him into this admiration of the care and love of God, is expreſſed, ver. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. There are no words of a more diſmal import in the whole book than thoſe here expreſſed; yet when he recollected himſelf from his overwhelming diſtreſs, he acknowledgeth that all this proceeded from the love and care of God; yea, his fixing his heart upon a man to magnify him, to ſet him up, and do him good; for this end doth he chaſten a man every morning, and try him every moment; and that with ſuch afflictions as are for the preſent, ſo far from being joyous, as that they give no reſt, but even weary the ſoul of life, as he expreſſeth their effects on himſelf, ver. 15, 16. And hence it is obſerved of this Job, that when

when none in the earth was like to him in trouble, God gave him three teſtimonies from heaven, that there was none on the earth like unto him in grace. And altho' it may not be laid down as a general rule, yet for the moſt part in the providence of God, from the foundation of the world, thoſe who have had moſt of afflictions, have had moſt of Grace, and the moſt eminent teſtimonies of acceptance with God. Chriſt Jeſus, the Son of God, the Head of the church, had all afflictions gathered into an head in him; and yet the Father always loved him, and was always well pleaſed with him.

When God ſolemnly renewed his covenant with Abraham, and he had prepared the ſacrifice whereby it was to be ratified and confirmed, God made a ſmoking furnace to paſs betwen the pieces of the ſacrifice, Gen. xv. 17. It was to let him know, that there was a furnace of affliction attending the covenant of grace and peace. And ſo he tells Sion, that he choſe her in the furnace of affliction, Iſa. xlviii. 10. that is, in Egyptian affliction, burning, flaming afflictions, fiery trials, as Peter calls them, 1 Pet. iv. 12. There can then no argument be drawn from affliction, from any kind of it, from any aggravating circumſtance wherewith it may be attended, that ſhould any way diſcourage the ſoul in its comforting ſupporting perſwaſion of an intereſt in the love of God, and forgiveneſs thereby.

2. No length or continuance of afflictions ought to be any impeachment of our ſpiritual conſolation. Take for the confirmation hereof, the great example of the Son of God. How long did his afflictions continue? What end or iſſue was put to them? No longer did they abide, than until he cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghoſt. To the moment of his death, from his manger to his croſs, his afflictions ſtill increaſed, and he ended his days in the midſt of them. Now, he was the Head of the church, and the great repreſentative of it; unto a conformity with whom we are predeſtinated. And if God will have it ſo with us, even in

this particular, ſo as that we ſhall have no reſt, no peace from our trials, untill we ly down in the grave, that whatever condition we paſs through, we ſhall be ſhut out of none, but only from immortality and glory, what have we herein to complain of?

3. Where the remembrance and perplexing ſenſe of paſt ſins is revived by preſent afflictions, ſeparate them in your minds, and deal diſtinctly about them. So long as you carry on the conſideration of them jointly, you will be rolled from one to another, and never obtain reſt unto your ſouls. They will mutually aggravate each other. The ſharpneſs of affliction will add to the bitterneſs of the ſenſe of ſin; and the ſenſe of ſin will give an edge to affliction, and cauſe it to pierce deeply into the ſoul, as we ſhewed in the former inſtances. Deal therefore diſtinctly about them, and in their proper order: So doth the pſalmiſt here. He had at preſent both upon him, and together they brought him into theſe depths concerning which he ſo cries out for deliverance from them; ſee Pſal. xxxii. 3, 4. 5. And what courſe doth he take? He applies himſelf in the firſt place to his ſin, and the guilt of it, and that diſtinctly and ſeparately. And when he hath got a diſcharge of ſin, which he waited ſo earneſtly for, his faith quickly aroſe above his outward trials, as appears in his bleſſed cloſe of all; *He ſhall redeem Iſrael out of all his troubles;* the whole Iſrael of God, and myſelf amongſt them. This do then, ſingle out the ſin or ſins that are revived in the ſenſe of their guilt upon the conſcience; uſe all diligence to come to an iſſue about them in the blood of Chriſt. This God by your affliction calls you unto. This is the diſeaſe whereof your trouble is but the ſymptom. This therefore, in the cure you ſeek after, is firſt and principally to be attended unto; when that is once removed, the other, as to any prejudice unto your ſouls, will depart of it ſelf. The root being once digged up, you ſhall not long feed on the bitter fruit that it hath brought forth; or if you do, the wormwood ſhall be taken out of it, and it ſhall be

be very pleaſant unto you, as well as wholeſome. How this is to be done by an application unto God for forgiveneſs, hath been at large declared. But if men will deal with confuſed thoughts about their ſins and their ſins troubles, their wound will be incurable, and their ſorrow endleſs.

4. Remember that a time of affliction is a time of temptation. Satan, as we have ſhewed, will not be wanting unto any appearing opportunity or advantage of ſetting upon the ſoul. When Pharaoh heard that the people were intangled in the wilderneſs, he purſued them. And when Satan ſees a ſoul intangled with its diſtreſſes and troubles, he thinks it his time and hour to aſſault it. He ſeeks to winnow, and comes when the corn is under the flail. Reckon therefore, that when trouble cometh, the prince of the world cometh alſo, that you may be provided for him. Now is the time to take the ſhield of faith, that we may be able to quench his fiery darts. If they be neglected, they will inflame the ſoul. Watch therefore and pray, that you enter not into temptation; that Satan do not repreſent God falſly unto you. He that durſt repreſent Job falſly to the all ſeeing God, will with much more boldneſs repreſent God falſly unto us, who ſee and know ſo little. Be not then ignorant of his devices; but every way ſet yourſelves againſt his interpoſing between God and your ſouls, in a matter which he hath nothing to do withal. Let not this make-bate by any means inflame the difference.

5. Learn to diſtinguiſh the effect of natural diſtempers from ſpiritual diſtreſſes. Some have ſad, dark and tenacious thoughts fixed on their minds from their natural diſtempers. Theſe will not be cured by reaſonings, nor utterly quelled by faith. Our deſign muſt be to abate their efficacy and conſequents, by conſidering their occaſions. And if men cannot do this in themſelves, it is highly incumbent on thoſe who make application of relief unto them, to be careful to diſcern what

what is from ſuch principles, whereof they are not to expect a ſpeedy cure. And,

6. Take heed in times of peace and eaſe, that you lay not up, by your negligence or careleſs walking, ſad proviſion for a day of darkneſs, a time of afflictions. It is ſin that imbitters troubles; the ſins of peace are revived in the times of diſtreſs. Fear of future affliction, of impendent troubles, ſhould make us careful not to bring that into them which will make them bitter and ſorrowful.

7. Labour to grow better under all your afflictions, leſt your afflictions grow worſe; leſt God mingle them with more darkneſs, bitterneſs and terror. As Joab ſaid unto David, if he ceaſed not his ſcandalous lamentation on the death of Abſalom, all the people would leave him, and he then ſhould find himſelf in a far worſe condition than that which he bemoaned, or any thing that befel him from his youth. The ſame may be ſaid unto perſons under their afflictions. If they are not managed and improved in a due manner, that which is worſe may, nay, in all probability will befal them. Wherever God takes this way, and engageth in afflicting, he doth commonly purſue his work until he hath prevailed, and his deſign towards the afflicted party be accompliſhed. He will not ceaſe to threſh and break the bread-corn untill it be meet for his uſe. Lay down then the weapons of thy warfare againſt him; give up yourſelves to his will; let go every thing about which he contends with you; follow after that which he calls you unto, and you will find light ariſing unto you in the midſt of darkneſs. Hath he a cup of affliction in one hand, lift up your eyes and you will ſee a cup of conſolation in another. And if all ſtars withdraw their light, whilſt you are in the way of God, aſſure yourſelves, that the ſun is ready to riſe.

8, According to the tenor of the covenant of grace, a man may be ſenſible of the reſpect of affliction unto ſin; yea, unto this or that ſin in particular, and yet have a comfortable perſwaſion of the forgiveneſs of ſin.

Thus

Thus it was in general in God's dealing with his people; *He forgave them, but he took vengeance on their inventions*, Pſal. xcix. 8. Whatever they ſuffered under the vengeance that fell upon their inventions (and that is as hard a word as is applied any where unto God's dealing with his people,) yet at the ſame time he aſſured them of the pardon of their ſin: So you know was the caſe with David. His greateſt trial and affliction, and that which befel him on the account of a particular ſin, and wherein God took vengeance on his invention, was uſhered in with a word of grace, that God had done away, or pardoned his ſins, and that he ſhould not die. This is expreſſed in the tenor of the covenant with the ſeed of Chriſt, Pſal. lxxxix. 31, 32, 33, 34.

Objections againſt believing from things internal.----- The perſon knows not whether he be regenerate or no.------State of regeneration aſſerted.------- Difference of ſaving and common grace.------This difference diſcernible.------Men may know themſelves to be regenerate.------The objection anſwered.

Another head of objections and deſpondencies ariſeth from things internal, things that are required in the ſoul, that it may have an intereſt in the forgiveneſs that is with God. Some whereof we ſhall ſpeak unto; and theſe reſpect, *firſt*, the ſtate of the ſoul; and *ſecondly*, ſome actings in the ſoul.

First, As to the ſtate, ſay ſome, unleſs a man be regenerate, and born again, he is not, he cannot be made partaker of mercy and pardon. Now, all things are here in the dark unto us: For firſt we know not well what this regeneration is, and it is variouſly diſputed amongſt men. Some would place it only in the outward ſigns of our initiation unto Chriſt, and ſome otherwiſe expreſs it. Again, it is uncertain, whether thoſe that are regenerate do or may know that they are ſo; or whether this may be in any meaſure known unto

others

others with whom they may treat about it: And if it may not be known, we muſt be uncertain in this alſo. And then, it may be for their parts, they neither know the time when, nor the manner how any ſuch work was wrought in them; and yet without this, ſeeing it is wrought by means, and ſprings from certain cauſes, they can have no eſtabliſhment in a not-failing perſwaſion of their acceptance with God, by the pardon of their ſins in the blood of Chriſt. This is the head and ſum of the moſt of the objections which perplexed ſouls do manage againſt themſelves as to their ſtate and condition. Hence indeed they draw forth reaſonings with great variety, according as they are ſuggeſted by their particular occaſions and temptations. And many proofs taken from their ſins, miſcarriages and fears, do they enforce their objections withal. My purpoſe is to lay down ſome general rules and principles, which may be applied unto particular occaſions and emergencies; and this ſhall be done in anſwer to the ſeveral parts of the general objection mentioned before. I ſay then,

Firſt, It is moſt certain that there are two eſtates and conditions that divide all mankind; and every one that lives in the world, doth completely and abſolutely belong unto one of them. Theſe are the ſtate of nature, and the ſtate of grace, of ſin, and of righteouſneſs by Chriſt, every man in the world belongs unto one of theſe ſtates or conditions. This the ſcripture ſo abounds in, that it ſeems to be the firſt principal thing that we are taught in it. It is as clear, that there are two different ſtates in this world, as that there are ſo in that to come; yea, all our faith and our obedience depend on this truth: And not only ſo, but the covenant of God, the mediation of Chriſt, and all the promiſes and threats of the law and goſpel are built upon this ſuppoſition. And this lays naked unto a ſpiritual eye, that abounding atheiſm that is in the world. Men are not only like Nicodemus, ignorant of theſe things, and wonder how they can be, but they ſcorn them, deſpiſe them, ſcoff at them. To make mention of being regenerate

generate is expoſed to reproach in the world. But whether men will or no, unto one of theſe conditions they muſt belong.

Secondly, As theſe two eſtates differ morally in themſelves, and phyſically in the cauſes conſtitutive of that difference; ſo there is a ſpecifical difference between the things that place men in the one condition and in the other. Whatever there is of goodneſs virtue, duty, grace in an unregenerate perſon, there is in him that is regenerate ſomewhat of another kind that is not in the other at all; for the difference of theſe ſtates themſelves it is plain in ſcripture. The one is a ſtate of death, the other of life; the one of darkneſs, the other of light; the one of enmity againſt God, the other of reconciliation with him. And that the one ſtate is conſtituted by that of grace, which is of a peculiar kind, and which is not in the other, I ſhall briefly declare.

1. The grace of regeneration proceedeth from an eſpecial ſpring and fountain, which emptieth much of its living waters into it, no one drop whereof falls on them that are regenerate. This is electing love; it is given out in the way of purſuit of the decree of election; God hath choſen us that we ſhould be holy, Eph. i. 4 Our holineſs, whoſe only ſpring is our regeneration, is an effect of our election; that which God works in our ſouls, in the purſuit of his eternal purpoſe of his love and good will towards us. So again, ſaith the apoſtle, 2 Theſſ. ii. 13. *God hath from the beginning choſen you to ſalvation through ſanctification of the Spirit.* God having deſigned us unto ſalvation as the end, hath alſo appointed the ſanctification of the Spirit to be the means to bring us orderly unto the attainment of that end. But the beſt common grace or gifts that may be in men unregenerate, are but products of the providence of God, ordering all things in general unto his own glory, and the good of them that ſhall be heirs of ſalvation. They are not fruits of electing eternal love,

nor deſigned means for the infallible attaining of eternal ſalvation.

2. The graces of thoſe that are regenerate have a manifold reſpect or relation to the Lord Chriſt, that the common graces of others have not. I ſhall name one or two of theſe reſpects.

(1.) They have an eſpecial moral relation to the mediatory acts of Chriſt in his oblation and interceſſion. Eſpecial grace is an eſpecial part of the purchaſe of Chriſt. By his death and blood-ſheding, he made a double purchaſe of his elect; of their perſons to be his; of eſpecial grace to be theirs. *He gave himſelf for his church, that he might ſanctify and cleanſe it with the waſhing of water by the word, that he might preſent it unto himſelf a glorious church, not having ſpot or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing, but that it ſhould be holy and without blemiſh*, Eph. v. 26, 27. The deſign of Chriſt in giving himſelf for his church, was to procure for it that eſpecial grace, whereby, through the uſe of means, it might be regenerate, ſanctified and purified. So Titus ii. 14. *He gave himſelf that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works.* Real purification in grace and holineſs hath this eſpecial relation unto the death of Chriſt, that he deſigned therein to procure it for them for whom he died. And in purſuit of his purchaſe or acquiſition of it, his purpoſe was really to beſtow it upon them, or effectually to work it in them. Moreover, it hath an eſpecial relation unto his interceſſion; and that in a diſtinguiſhing manner from any other gifts or common graces that other men may receive. Giving us the rule and pattern of his interceſſion, John xvii. he tells us, that he ſo prays not for the world, but for his elect; thoſe which the Father had given him, becauſe they were his, ver. 9. And what is it that he prays for them, in diſtinction from all other men whatever? Amongſt others, this is one principal thing that he inſiſts on, ver. 17. *Sanctify them through thy truth.* Their ſanctification and holineſs is granted upon that prayer and interceſſion

ceſſion of Chriſt, which is peculiar unto them, with an excluſion of all others; *I pray for them, I pray not for the world.* Now, the common grace of unregenerate perſons, whereby they are diſtinguiſhed from other men, whatever it be, it hath not this eſpecial relation to the oblation and interceſſion of Chriſt. Common grace is not the procurement of eſpecial interceſſion.

(2.) They have a real relation unto Chriſt as he is the living quickning head of the church; for he is ſo, even the living ſpiritual fountain of the ſpiritual life of it, and of all vital acts whatever. Chriſt is our life, and our life is hid with him in God, Col. iii. 2, 3. That eternal life which conſiſts in the knowledge of the Father and the Son, Joh. xvii. 3. is in him as the cauſe, head, ſpring and fountain of it. In him it is in its fulneſs, and from thence it is derived unto all that believe, who receive from his fulneſs grace for grace, Joh. i. 16. All true ſaving ſanctifying grace, all ſpiritual life, and every thing that belongs thereunto, is derived directly from Chriſt as the living Head of his church, and fountain of all ſpiritual life unto them. This the apoſtle expreſſeth, Eph. iv. 15, 16. *Speaking the truth in love, grow up unto him in all things, which is the Head, even Chriſt; from whom the whole body fitly joyned together, and compacted by that which every joynt ſupplieth, according to the effectual working in the meaſure of every part, maketh increaſe of the body unto the edifying of itſelf in love.* To the ſame purpoſe he again expreſſeth the ſame matter, Col. ii. 19. All grace in the whole body comes from the Head Chriſt Jeſus; and there is no growth or furtherance of it, but by his effectual working in every part, to bring it unto the meaſure deſigned unto it. Nothing then, no not the leaſt of this grace, can be obtained but by virtue of our union unto Chriſt as our Head, becauſe it conſiſts in a vital effectual influence from him, and his fulneſs. And this kind of relation unto Chriſt, all grace that is, or may be in unregenerate men, is incapable of.

(3.) The grace of regeneration, and the fruits of it, are adminiſtred in and by the covenant. This is the promiſe of the covenant, that God will write his law in our hearts, and put his fear in our inward parts, that we ſhall not depart from him, Jer. xxxii. 40. This is that grace whereof we ſpeak, whatever it be, or of what kind ſoever. It is beſtowed on none but thoſe who are taken into covenant with God; for unto them alone it is promiſed, and by virtue thereof is it wrought in and upon their ſouls. Now, all unregenerate men are ſtrangers from the covenant, and are not made partakers of that grace which is peculiarly and only promiſed thereby, and exhibited therein.

(4.) The leaſt ſpark of ſaving regenerating grace is wrought in the ſoul by the Holy Ghoſt, as given unto men to dwell in them, and abide with them. He is the water given by Jeſus Chriſt unto believers, which is in them *a well of water ſpringing up to everlaſting life*, John iv. 14. Firſt they receive the water, the ſpring itſelf, that is, the Holy Spirit; and from whence living waters do ariſe up in them; they are wrought, affected, produced by the Spirit, which is given unto them: Now, although the common gifts and graces of men unregenerate are effects of the power of the Holy Ghoſt wrought in them, and beſtowed on them, as are all other works of God's providence; yet it doth not work in them, as received by them, to dwell in them, and abide with them, as a never-failing ſpring of ſpiritual life. For ſo our Saviour ſays expreſly, that the world, or unbelievers, do not know the Spirit, nor can receive him abiding in them. All which, in a contradiſtinction unto all unregenerate perſons, are affirmed of all them that do believe.

(5.) The leaſt of ſaving grace, ſuch as is peculiar unto them that are regenerate, is ſpirit, John iii. 6. *That which is born of the ſpirit, is ſpirit.* Whatever it is that is ſo born, it is ſpirit, it hath a ſpiritual being, and it is not educible by any means out of the principles of nature. So it is ſaid to be a new creature, 2 Cor. v. 27.

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Be it never so little or so great, however it may differ in degrees in one and in another, yet the nature of it is the same in all; It is a new creature. As the least worm of the earth, in the order of the whole creation, is no less a creature than the sun, yea, or the most glorious angel in heaven; so in the order of the new creation, the least spark or dram of true grace that is from the sanctifying spirit, is a new creature, no less than the highest faith or love that ever was in the chiefest of the apostles. Now, that which is spirit, and that which is not spirit; that which hath a new spiritual being, and that which hath none, whatever appearance of agreement there may be among them, do yet differ specifically from one another. And thus it is with the saving grace that is in a regenerate, and those common graces that are in others which are not so. So that as these are divers states, so they are eminently different and distinct the one from the other; and this answers the second thing laid down in the objections, taken from the uncertainty of these states, and of regeneration itself, and the real difference of it from the contrary state, which is exclusive of an interest in forgiveness.

(6.) This is laid down in the enquiry, whether this state may be known unto him who is really partaker of it, or translated into it, or unto others that may be concerned therein? To which I say, the difference that is between these two states, and the constitutive causes of them, as it is real, so it is discernible; it may be known by themselves who are in those states, and others. It may be known who are born of God, and who are yet children of the devil; who are quickned by Christ, and who are yet dead in trespasses and sin. But here also observe.

1*st*, That I do not say, This is always known to the persons themselves concerned in this distribution. Many cry peace, peace, when sudden destruction is at hand. These either think themselves regenerate when they are not, or else wilfully despise the consideration of what is required in them, that they may have peace, and so

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delude their own ſouls unto their ruin. And many that are truly born of God, yet know it not; they may for a ſeaſon walk in darkneſs and have no light. Nor,

2*dly*. That this is always known to others. It is not known to unregenerate men in reſpect of them that are ſo. For they know not really and ſubſtantially what it is to be ſo. Natural men perceive not the things of God; that is, ſpiritually, in their own light and nature, 2 Cor. ii. And as they cannot aright diſcern the things which put men into that condition, (for they are fooliſhneſs unto them,) ſo they cannot judge aright of their perſons in whom they are. And if they do at any time judge aright notionally concerning any things or perſons, yet they do not judge ſo upon right grounds, nor with any evidence in or unto themſelves of what they do judge. Wherefore, generally they judge amiſs of ſuch perſons; and becauſe they make profeſſion of ſomewhat which they find not in themſelves, they judge them hypocrites, and falſe pretenders unto what is not. For thoſe things which evince their union with Chriſt, and which evidence their being born of God, they favour them not, nor can receive them; nor is this always known unto, or diſcerned by, them that are regenerate. They may ſometimes with Peter think a Simon Magus to be a true believer; or with Eli an Hannah to be a daughter of Belial. Many hypocrites are ſo ſet forth with gifts, common graces, light and profeſſion, that they paſs amongſt all believers for ſuch as are born of God. And many poor ſaints may be ſo diſguiſed under darkneſs, temptation, ſin, as to be looked on as ſtrangers from that family whereunto indeed they do belong. The judgment of man may fail, but the judgment of God is according unto righteouſneſs; wherefore.

3*dly*, This is that we ſay: It may be known in the ſedulous uſe of means appointed for that end, to a man's ſelf and others, which of the conditions mentioned he doth belong unto; that is, whether he be regenerate or no, ſo far as his or their concernment lies therein.

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This I ſay may be known, and that infallibly and aſſuredly with reference unto any duty wherein from hence we are concerned. The diſcharge of ſome duties in ourſelves, and towards others, depends on this knowledge, and therefore we may attain it, ſo far as it is neceſſary for the diſcharge of ſuch duties unto the glory of God. Now, becauſe it is not directly in our way, yet having been mentioned, I ſhall briefly in our paſſage touch upon the latter, or what duties do depend upon our judging of others to be regenerate, and the way or principles whereby ſuch a judgment may be made.

1. There are many duties incumbent on us to be performed with and towards profeſſors; which, without admitting a judgment to be made of their ſtate and condition, cannot be performed in faith: And in reference unto theſe duties alone, it is, that we are called to judge the ſtate of others. For we are not giving countenance unto a raſh uncharitable cenſuring of mens ſpiritual conditions, nor unto any judging of any men, any other than what our own duty towards them, doth indiſpenſibly require. Thus, if we are to lay down our lives for the brethren, it is very meet we ſhould ſo far know them ſo to be, as that we may hazard our lives in faith when we are called thereunto. We are alſo to join with them in thoſe ordinances, wherein we make a ſolemn profeſſion that we are members of the ſame body with them, that we have the ſame head, the ſame ſpirit, faith and love: We muſt love them, becauſe they are begotten of God, children of our heavenly Father; and therefore muſt on ſome good ground believe them ſo to be, In a word, the due performance of all principal mutual goſpel-duties, to the glory of God and our own edification, depends on this ſuppoſition, that we may have ſuch a ſatisfying perſwaſion concerning the ſpiritual conditions of others, as from thence we may take our aim in what we do.

2. For the grounds hereof I ſhall mention one only; which all others do lean upon. This is expreſſed, 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13. *As the body is one, and hath many members*

members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body, so is Christ. For by one spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one spirit. They are all united unto, and hold of one head: For as are the members of the body, natural under one head, so is Christ mystical, that is, all believers under Christ their Head. And this union they have by the inhabitation of the same quickning spirit, which is in Christ their Head, and by him they are brought all into the same spiritual state and frame; they are made to drink into one and the same spirit; for this same spirit produceth the same effects in them all, the same in kind though differing in degrees, as the apostle fully declares, Eph. iv. 3, 4, 5, 6, And this spirit is in them, and not in the world, John xvi. And as this gives them a naturalness in their duties one towards another; or in mutual caring for, rejoicing and sorrowing with one another, as members one of another, 1 Cor. xii. 25, 26. So it reveals and discovers them to each other, so far as is necessary for the performance of the duties mentioned, in such a manner as becomes members of the same body. There is on this account a spiritually natural answering of one to another, as face answereth face in the water. They can see and discern that in others whereof they have experience in themselves; they can taste and relish that in others, which they feed upon in themselves, and wherein the lives of their souls do consist; the same spirit of life being in them, they have the same spiritual taste and savour. And unless their pallats are distempered by temptations or false opinions, or prejudices, they can, in their communion, taste of that spirit in each other, which they are all made to drink into. This gives them the same likeness and image in the inward man, the same heavenly light in their minds, the same affections; and being thus prepared and enabled to judge and discern of the state of each other, in reference unto their mutual duties, they have moreover

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the true rule of the word to judge of all spirits and spiritual effects by. And this is the ground of all that love without dissimulation, and real communion that is among the saints of God in this world. But here two cautions must be allowed.

1. That we would not judge the state and condition of any men in the world, no further than we are called thereunto in a way of duty; and we are so called only with reference unto the duties that we are to perform towards them. What have we to do to judge them that are without, that is, any one that we have not a call to consider in reference unto our own duty. Herein that great rule takes place; *Judge not, that ye be not judged.* Let us leave all men, the worst of men, unless where evident duty requires other actings, to the judgment-seat of God. They are the servants of another, and they stand or fall unto their own master. There have been great miscarriages amongst us in this matter, some have been ready to condemn all that go not along with them in every principle, yea opinion or practice And every day slight occcasions and provications, are made the grounds and reasons of severe censures: But nothing is more contrary to the conduct of the meek and holy spirit of Christ. This is our rule, are we called to act towards any as saints, as living members of the body of Christ, and that in such duties as we cannot perform in faith, unless we are perswaded that so they are? Then are we on the grounds and by the ways before-mentioned, to satisfy ourselves in one another.

2. Do we endeavour mutually to discern the condition of one another, in reference unto such ends? Let us be sure to look into and pursue those ends, when we have attained our satisfaction. What these ends are hath been shewed. It is that we may love them without dissimulation, as members of the same mystical body with us; that we may naturally take care of them, and for them; that we may delight sincerely in them; that we may minister unto their wants, temporal

and ſpiritual; that we may watch over them with pity and compaſſion. Theſe, and the like, are the only ends for which we are, at any time, called to the conſideration of the ſpiritual condition of one another; if theſe be neglected, the other is uſeleſs. And here lies a great aggravation of that neglect, in that ſuch a way is made for the avoidance of it. Here lies the life or death of all church-ſociety. All church ſociety and relation is built on this ſuppoſition, that the members of it are all regenerate. Some lay this foundation in baptiſm only, profeſſing that all that are baptized are regenerate; others require a farther ſatisfaction in the real work itſelf: But all build on the ſame foundation, that all church-members are to be regenerate. And to what end is this? namely, that they may all mutually perform thoſe duties one towards another, which are incumbent mutually on regenerate perſons. If theſe are omitted, there is an end of all profitable uſe of church-ſociety. Churches without this are but mere huſks and ſhells of churches, carcaſſes without ſouls. For as there is no real union unto Chriſt without faith, ſo there is no real union among the members of any church without love, and that acting itſelf in all the duties mentioned. Let not this ordinance be in vain.

But we muſt return from this digreſſion, to that which lies before us, which is concerning what a man may diſcern concerning himſelf being regenerate or born again. I ſay then,

Secondly, Men may come to an aſſured ſatisfactory perſwaſion that themſelves are regenerate, and that ſuch, as is ſo far infallible, as that it will not deceive them, when it is brought unto the trial. For there are many duties, whoſe performance in faith unto the glory of God, and the edification of our own ſouls doth depend on this perſuaſion and conviction. As,

1. A due ſenſe of our relation unto God and an anſwerable comportment of our ſpirits and hearts towards him. He that is born again, is born of God; he is begotten of God by the immortal ſeed of the word. Without

out a perſuaſion hereof, how can a man, on grounds of faith, carry himſelf towards God as his Father? And how great a part of our obedience towards him, and communion with him, depends hereon, we all know. If men fluctuate all their days in this matter, if they come to no ſettlement in it, no comfortable perſuaſion of it, they ſcarce ever act any genuine childlike acts of love or delight towards God, which exceedingly impeacheth their whole obedience.

2. Thankfulneſs for grace received is one of the principal duties that is incumbent on believers in this world. Now, how can a man in faith bleſs God for that which he is utterly uncertain whether he have received it from him or no? I know ſome men run on in a road in this matter. They will bleſs God in a formal way, for their regeneration, ſanctification, juſtification, and the like: But if you aſk them, whether themſelves are regenerate or no, they will be ready to ſcoff at it; or, at leaſt, to profeſs that they know no ſuch thing. What is this but to mock God, and in a preſumptuous manner to take his name in vain? But, if we will praiſe God, as we ought, for his grace, as we are guided and directed in the ſcripture, as the nature of the matter requires, with ſuch a frame of heart as may influence our whole obedience, ſurely it cannot but be our duty to know the grace that we have received.

3. Again the main of our ſpiritual watch and diligence conſiſteth in the cheriſhing, improving, and increaſing of the grace that we have received; the ſtrengthening of the new creature that is wrought in us: Herein conſiſts principally the life of faith, and the exerciſe of that ſpiritual wiſdom which faith furniſheth the ſoul withal. Now, how can any man apply himſelf hereunto, whilſt he is altogether uncertain whether he hath received any principle of living ſaving grace, or no? Whereas therefore God requires our utmoſt diligence, watchfulneſs and care in this matter, it is certain that he requires alſo of us, and grants unto us, that which is the foundation of all theſe duties, which lies in an

acquaintance with that ſtate and condition whereunto we do belong. In brief, there is nothing we have to do in reference unto eternity, but one way or other it hath a reſpect unto our light and convictions, as to our ſtate and condition in this world. And thoſe who are negligent in the trial and examination thereof, do leave all things between God and their ſouls at abſolute uncertainties, and dubious hazards; which is not to lead the life of faith.

We ſhall now, upon theſe premiſes, return unto that part of the objection which is under conſideration. Say ſome; "We know not whether we are regenerate "or no, and are therefore altogether uncertain whe- "ther we have an intereſt in that forgiveneſs that is "with God; nor dare we, on that account admit of "the conſolation that is tendered on the truth inſiſted "on."

Suppoſing what hath been ſpoken in general, I ſhall lay down the grounds of reſolving this perplexing doubt in the enſuing rules.

RULE I.

See that the perſuaſion and aſſurance hereof, which you look after and deſire, be regular, and not ſuch as is ſuited merely unto your own imaginations. Our ſecond and third general rules about the nature of all ſpiritual aſſurance, and what is conſiſtent therewithal, are here to be taken into conſideration. If you look to have ſuch an evidence, light into, and abſolute conviction of this matter, as ſhall admit of no doubts, fears, queſtionings, juſt occaſions and cauſes of new trials, teachings, and ſelf-examinations, you will be greatly deceived. Regeneration induceth a new principle into the ſoul, but it doth not utterly expel the old; ſome would have ſecurity, not aſſurance. The principle of ſin and unbelief will ſtill abide in us, and ſtill work in us. Their abiding and their acting muſt needs put the

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ſoul upon a ſevere enquiry, whether they are not prevalent in it beyond what the condition of regeneration will admit. The conſtant conflicts we muſt have with ſin, will not ſuffer us to have always ſo clear an evidence of our condition as we would deſire. Such a perſuaſion as is prevalent againſt ſtrong objections to the contrary, keeping up the heart to a due performance of thoſe duties in faith, which belong unto the ſtate of regeneration, is the ſubſtance of what in this kind you are to look after.

RULE II.

If you are doubtful concerning your ſtate and condition, do not expect an extraordinary determination of it by an immediate teſtimony of the Spirit of God. I do grant that God doth ſometimes, by this means, bring in peace and ſanctification unto the ſoul; he gives his own Spirit immediately to bear witneſs with ours, that we are the children of God, both upon the account of regeneration and adoption. He doth ſo, but, as far as we can obſerve, in a way of ſovereignty, when and to whom he pleaſeth. Beſides, that men may content and ſatisfy themſelves with his ordinary teachings, conſolations, and communications of his grace, he hath left the nature of that peculiar teſtimony of the Spirit very dark and difficult to be found out, few agreeing wherein it doth conſiſt, or what is the nature of it: No one man's experience is a rule unto others; and an undue apprehenſion of it, is a matter of great danger. Yet it is certain, that humble ſouls, in extraordinary caſes, may have recourſe unto it with benefit and relief thereby. This then you may deſire, you may pray for, but not with ſuch a frame of Spirit as to refuſe that other ſatisfaction, which in the ways of truth and peace you may find. This is the putting of the hand into the ſide of Chriſt; but bleſſed are they who believe, and yet have not ſeen.

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RULE III.

If you have, at any time formerly, received any especial or immediate pledge or teſtimony of God given unto your ſouls, as unto their ſincerity, and conſequently their regeneration; labour to recover it, and to revive a ſenſe of it upon your ſpirits, now in your darkneſs and trouble. I am perſwaded there are but few believers, but that God doth at one time or other, in one duty or other, entering into, or coming out of one temptation or another, give ſome ſingular teſtimony unto their own ſouls and conſciences concerning their ſincerity, and his acceptance of them. Sometimes he doth this in a duty, wherein he hath enabled the ſoul to make ſo near an approach unto him, as that it hath been warmed, enlivened, ſweetened, ſatisfied with the preſence the gracious preſence of God, and which God hath made unto him as a token of his uprightneſs. Sometimes, when a man is entering into any great temptation, trial, difficult or dangerous duty, that death itſelf is feared in it, God comes in by one means or other, by a ſecret intimation of his love, which he gives him to take along with him for his furniture and proviſion in his way, and thereby teſtifies to him his ſincerity. And this ſerves like the food of Elijah, for forty days in a wilderneſs condition. Sometimes he is pleaſed to ſhine immediately into the ſoul in the midſt of its darkneſs and ſorrow, wherewith it is ſurprized, as not looking for any ſuch expreſſion of kindneſs, and is thereby relieved againſt its own preſſing ſelf-condemnation. And ſometimes the Lord is pleaſed to give theſe tokens of love unto the ſoul as its refreſhment, when it is coming off from the ſtorm of temptations wherewith it hath been toſſed. And many other times and ſeaſons there are, wherein God is pleaſed to give unto believers ſome eſpecial teſtimony in their conſciences unto their own integrity. But now, theſe are all wrought by a tranſi-

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ent operation of the Spirit, exciting and enabling the heart unto a ſpiritual ſenſible apprehenſion and receiving of God's expreſſing kindneſs towards it. Theſe things abide not in their ſenſe, and in their power which they have upon our affections, but imediately paſs away. They are therefore to be treaſured up in the mind and judgment, to be improved and made uſe of by faith, as occaſion ſhall require; but we are apt to loſe them. Moſt men know no other uſe of them, but whilſt they feel them; yea, through ignorance in our duty to improve them, they prove like a ſudden light brought into a dark place, and again removed which ſeems to increaſe, and really aggravates, our ſenſe of the darkneſs. The true uſe of them is to lay them up, and ponder them in our hearts, that they may be ſupportments and teſtimonies unto us in a time of need. Have you then, who are now in the dark as to your ſtate and condition, whether you are regenerate or no, ever received any ſuch refreſhing and chearing teſtimony from God given unto your integrity, and your acceptance with him thereupon? Call it over again, and make uſe of it againſt thoſe diſcouragements which ariſe from your preſent darkneſs in this matter, and which keep you off from ſharing in the conſolation tendred unto you in this word of grace.

RULE IV.

A due ſpiritual conſideration of the cauſes and effects of regeneration, is the ordinary way and means whereby the ſouls of believers come to be ſatisfied concerning that work of God in them, and upon them. The principle or cauſes of this work, are the Spirit and the word. He that is born again, is born of the Spirit, John iii. 6 and of the word; *Of his own will begat he us by the word of his truth*, James i. 18. *We are born again by the word of God that abideth for ever*, 1 Pet. i. 23. Wherever then a man is regenerate, there hath been

been an effectual work of the Spirit, and of the word upon his ſoul. This is to be enquired into, and after. Ordinarily it will diſcover itſelf. Such impreſſions will be made in it upon the ſoul, ſuch a change will be wrought and produced in it, as will not eſcape a ſpiritual diligent ſearch and enquiry. And this is much of the duty of ſuch as are in the dark, and uncertain concerning the accompliſhment of this work in themſelves: Let them call to mind what have been the actings of the Spirit by the word upon their ſouls; what light thereby hath been communicated unto their minds; what diſcoveries of the Lord Chriſt, and way of ſalvation, have been made to them; what ſenſe and deteſtation of ſin have been wrought in them; what ſatisfaction have been given unto the ſoul, to chooſe, accept, and acquieſce in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt; what reſignation of the heart unto God, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, it hath been wrought unto. Call to mind what tranſactions there have been between God and your ſouls, about theſe things; how far they have been carried on; whether you have broken off the treaty with God, and refuſed his terms; or, if not, where the ſtay is between you; and what is the reaſon, ſince God hath graciouſly begun to deal thus with you, that you are not yet come to a thorough cloſe with him in the work and deſign of his grace; the defect muſt of neceſſity ly on your parts. God doth nothing in vain; had he not been willing to receive you, he would not have dealt with you ſo far as he hath done. There is nothing then remains to firm your condition, but a reſolved act of your own wills, in anſwering the mind and will of God. And by this ſearch may the ſoul come to ſatisfaction in this matter, or at leaſt find out and diſcover where the ſtick is, whence the uncertainty doth ariſe, and what is wanting to compleat their deſire.

Again, this work may be diſcovered by its effects. There is ſomething that is produced by it in the ſoul, which may alſo be conſidered either with reſpect unto its being and exiſtence, or unto its actings and operations;

operations; in the firſt regard, it is Spirit, John iii. 6. *That which is born of the Spirit*, which is produced by the effectual operation of the Spirit of God, it *is ſpirit*; a new creature, 2 Cor. v. 17. *He that is in Chriſt Jeſus* (who is born again) *is a new creature*, a new life, a ſpiritual life, Gal. ii. 20. Eph. ii. 1. In brief, it is an habitual furniſhment of all the faculties of the ſoul, with new ſpiritual vital principles, enabling a perſon, in all inſtances of obedience, to lead a ſpiritual life unto God. This principle is by this work produced in the ſoul; and in reſpect of its actings, it conſiſts in all the gracious operations of the mind, will, heart or affections, in the duties of obedience which God hath required of us. This is that which gives life unto our duties (without which the beſt of our works are but dead works) and renders them acceptable unto the living God. It is not my buſineſs at large to purſue and declare theſe things; I only mention them, that perſons who are kept back from a participation of the conſolation tendered from the forgiveneſs that is with God, becauſe they cannot comfortably conclude that they are born again, as knowing that it is unto ſuch perſons alone unto whom theſe conſolations do truely and really belong may know how to make a right judgment of themſelves. Let ſuch perſons then not fluctuate up and down in generals and uncertainties, with heartleſs complaints, which is the ruin of the peace of their ſouls; but let them really put things to the trial, by the examination of the cauſes and effects of the work they enquire after. It is by the uſe of ſuch means, whereby God will be pleaſed to give them all the aſſurance and eſtabliſhment concerning their ſtate and condition, which is needful for them, and which may give them encouragement in their courſe of obedience. But ſuppoſing all that hath been ſpoken; what if a man, by the utmoſt ſearch and enquiry that he is able to make, cannot attain any ſatisfactory perſuaſion, that indeed this great work of God's grace hath paſſed upon his ſoul; is this a ſufficient ground to keep him off from accepting of ſupport-

ment and conſolation from this truth, that there is forgiveneſs with God, which is the deſign of the objection laid down before? I ſay therefore further, that,

1. Regeneration doth not, in order of time, precede the ſoul's intereſt in the forgiveneſs that is with God, or its being made partaker of the pardon of ſin; I ſay no more, but that it doth not precede it in order of time not determining which hath precedency in order of nature! That, I confeſs, which the method of the goſpel leads unto, is, that abſolution, acquitment, or the pardon of ſin, is the foundation of the communication of all ſaving grace unto the ſoul, and ſo preceedeth all grace, in the ſinner whatever. But becauſe this abſolution, or pardon of ſin, is to be received by faith, whereby the ſoul is really made partaker of it, and all the benefits belonging thereunto; and that faith alſo is the radical grace which we receive in our regeneration; for it is by faith that our hearts are purified, as an inſtrument in the hand of the great purifier, the Spirit of God; I place theſe two together, and ſhall not diſpute as to their priority in nature; but in time the one doth not precede the other.

2. It is hence evident, that an aſſurance of being regenerate, is no way previouſly neceſſary unto the believing of an intereſt in forgiveneſs; ſo that although a man have not the former, it is or may be his duty to endeavour the latter. When convinced perſons cried out, What ſhall we do to be ſaved? the anſwer was, Believe and you ſhall be ſo? Believe in Chriſt, and in the remiſſion of ſin by his blood, is the firſt thing that convinced ſinners are called unto. They are not directed firſt to ſecure their ſouls that they are born again, and then afterwards to believe; but they are firſt to believe that the remiſſion of ſin is tendered unto them in the blood of Chriſt, and that by him they may be juſtified from all things from which they could not be juſtified by the law; Nor upon this propoſition is it the duty of men to queſtion whether they have faith or no, but actually to believe. And faith in its operation will

will evidence itself. See Acts xiii. 38, 39, Suppose then that you do not know that you are regenerate, that you are born of God; that you have no prevailing, refreshing constant evidence or persuasion thereof; Should this hinder you? Should this discourage you from believing forgiveness, from closing with the promises, and thereby obtaining in yourselves an interest in that forgiveness that is with God? Not at all; nay, this ought exceedingly to excite and stir you up unto your duty herein. For,

(1.) Suppose that it is otherwise; that indeed you are yet in the state of sin, and are only brought under the power of light and conviction; this is the way for a translation into an estate of spiritual life and grace: If you will forbear the acting of faith upon, and for forgiveness, until you are regenerate, you may, and probably you will, come short both of forgiveness and regeneration also. Here lay your foundation, and then your building will go on. This will open the door unto you and give you an entrance into the kingdom of God. Christ is the door; do not think to climb up over the wall; enter by him, or you will be kept out.

(2.) Suppose that you are born again, but yet know it not, as is the condition of many; this is the way whereby you may receive an evidence thereof. It is good embracing of all signs, tokens and pledges of our spiritual condition; and it is so to improve them: But the best course is to follow the genuine natural actings of faith, which leads us into the most settled apprehensions concerning our relation unto God, and acceptance with him. Believe first the forgiveness of sin, as the effect of mere grace and mercy in Christ. Let the faith hereof be nourished and strengthened in your souls. This will insensibly influence your hearts into a comforting gospel persuasion of your state and condition towards God, which will be accompanied with assured rest and peace.

To winde up this discourse; remember, that that which hath been spoken with reference unto the state

of regeneration in general, may be applied unto every particular objection, or cauſe of fear or diſcouragement, that may be reduced to that head. Such are all objections that ariſe from particular ſins, from aggravations of ſin by their greatneſs of circumſtances, or relapſes into them. The way that the conſideration of theſe things prevail upon the mind unto fears, is by begeting an apprehenſion in men that they are not regenerate; for if they were, they ſuppoſe they could not be ſo overtaken or intangled. The rules thereof laid down are ſuited to the ſtraits of the ſouls of ſinners in all ſuch particular caſes:

Laſtly, There was ſomewhat in particular added in the cloſe of the objection, which although it be not directly in our way, nor of any great importance in itſelf, yet having been mentioned, it is not unmeet to remove it out of the way, that it may not leave intanglement upon the minds of any. Now this is, that ſome know not, nor can give account of the time of their converſion unto God, and therefore cannot be ſatisfied that the ſaving work of his grace hath paſſed upon them. This is uſually and ordinarily ſpoken unto: And I ſhall therefore briefly give an account concerning it.

1: It hath been ſhewed, that in this matter, there are many things whereon we may regularly found a judgment concerning ourſelves; and it is great folly to wave them all, and put the iſſue of the matter upon one circumſtance. If a man have a trial at law, wherein he hath many evidences ſpeaking for him, only one circumſtance is dubious and in queſtion; he will not caſt the weight of his cauſe on that diſputed circumſtance, but will plead thoſe evidences that are more clear, and teſtify more fully in his behalf. I will not deny, but that this matter of the time of converſion is oft-times an important circumſtance: In the affirmative when it is known, it is of great uſe, tending to ſtability and conſolation; but yet it is ſtill but a circumſtance, ſuch as that the being of the thing itſelf doth not depend upon.

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He that is alive may know that he was born, though he know neither the place where, nor the time when he was ſo. And ſo may he that is ſpiritually alive, and hath ground of evidence that he is ſo, that was born again, though he knew neither when, nor where, nor how. And this caſe is uſual in perſons of quiet natural tempers, who have had the advantage of education under means of light and grace. God oft-times, in ſuch perſons, begins and carries on the work of his grace inſenſibly, ſo that they come to good growth and maturity before they know that they are alive. Such perſons come at length to be ſatisfied in ſaying with the blind man in the goſpel, How our eyes were opened we know not, only one thing we know, whereas we were blind by nature, now we ſee.

2. Even in this matter alſo, we muſt, it may be, be content to live by faith, and to believe as well what God hath done in us, if it be the matter and ſubject of his promiſes, as what he hath done for us, the ground whereof alſo is the promiſe and nothing elſe.

Objections from the preſent ſtate and condition of the ſoul :-----Weakneſs and imperfection of duty.-----Oppoſition from indwelling ſin.

3. There is another head of objections againſt the ſoul's receiving conſolation from an intereſt in forgiveneſs, ariſing from the conſideration of its preſent ſtate and condition as to actual holineſs, duties and ſin. Souls complain, when in darkneſs and under temptations, that they cannot find that holineſs, nor thoſe fruits of it in themſelves, which they ſuppoſe an intereſt in pardoning mercy will produce. Their hearts they find are weak, and all their duties worthleſs; if they were weighed in the ballance, they would be all found too light. In the beſt of them there is ſuch a mixture of ſelf, hypocriſy, unbelief, vain glory, that they are even aſhamed and confounded with the remembrance of them. Theſe things fill them with diſcouragements,

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ſo that they refuſe to be comforted, or to entertain any refreſhing perſuaſion from the truth inſiſted on; but rather conclude that they are utter ſtrangers from that forgiveneſs that is with God; and ſo continue helpleſs in their depths.

According unto the method propoſed, and hitherto purſued, I ſhall only lay down ſome ſuch general rules, as may ſupport a ſoul under the deſpondencies, that are apt in ſuch a condition to befal it, that none of theſe things may weaken it in its endeavour to lay hold of forgiveneſs. And,

Firſt, This is the proper place to put in execution our ſeventh rule, to take heed of heartleſs complaints, when vigorous actings of grace are expected at our hands. If it be thus indeed, why ly you on your faces, why do you not riſe, and put out yourſelves to the utmoſt, giving all diligence to add one grace to another, untill you find yourſelves in a better frame? Suppoſing then the putting of that rule into practice; I add, that.

1*ſt,* Known holineſs, is apt to degenerate into ſelf-righteouſneſs. What God gives us on the account of ſanctification, we are ready enough to reckon on the ſcore of juſtification. It is a hard thing to feel grace, and to believe as if there were none. We have ſo much of the Phariſee in us by nature, that it is ſometimes well that our good is hid from us. We are ready to take our corn and wine, and beſtow them on other lovers. Were there not in our hearts a ſpiritually ſenſible principle of corruption, and in our duties a diſcernible mixture of ſelf; it would be impoſſible we ſhould walk ſo humbly, as is required of them who hold communion with God in a covenant of grace and pardoning mercy. It is a good life, which is attended with a faith of righteouſneſs, and a ſenſe of corruption. Whilſt I know Chriſt's righteouſneſs, I ſhall the leſs care to know my own holineſs. To be holy is neceſſary; to know it, ſometimes a temptation.

2*dly,* Even duties of God's appointment, when turn-

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ed into ſelf-righteouſneſs, are God's abhorrency, Iſa. lxvi. 2, 3. What hath a good original, may be vitiated by a bad end.

3*dly*, Oftentimes holineſs in the heart is more known by the oppoſition that is made there to it, than by its own prevalent working; the Spirit's operation is known by the fleſh's oppoſition. We find a man's ſtrength by the burdens he carries, and not the pace that he goes. *Oh, wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death?* is a better evidence of grace and holineſs, than *God I thank thee I am not as other men.* A heart preſſed, grieved, burdened, not by the guilt of ſin only, which reflects with trouble on an awakened conſcience; but by the cloſe adhering power of indwelling ſin, tempting, ſeducing, ſoliciting, hindering, captivating, conceiving, reſtleſly diſquieting; may from thence have as clear an evidence of holineſs, as from a delightful fruit-bearing. What is it, that is troubled and grieved in thee? what is it, that ſeems to be almoſt killed and deſtroyed; that cries out, complains, longs for deliverance? Is it not the new creature? is it not the principle of ſpiritual life, whereof thou art partaker? I ſpeak not of trouble and diſquietments for ſin committed, nor of fears and perturbations of mind, leſt ſin ſhould break forth to loſs, ſhame, ruin, diſhonour; nor of the contending of a convinced conſcience, leſt damnation ſhould enſue; but of the ſtriving of the ſpirit againſt ſin, out of a hatred and a loathing of it, upon all the mixt conſiderations of love, grace, mercy, fear, the beauty of holineſs, excellency of communion with God, that are propoſed in the goſpel. If thou ſeemeſt to thyſelf to be only paſſive in theſe things, to do nothing, but to endure the aſſaults of ſin; yet if thou art ſenſible, and ſtandeſt under the ſtroke of it, as under the ſtroke of an enemy, there is the root of the matter. And as it is thus, as to the Subſtance and being of holineſs, ſo it is alſo as to the degrees of it. Degrees of holineſs are to be meaſured more by oppoſition, than ſelf operation. He may have more grace than

than another, who brings not forth ſo much fruit as the other; becauſe he hath more oppoſition, more temptation, Iſa xli. 17. And ſenſe of the want of all, is a great ſign of ſomewhat in the ſoul.

Secondly, As to what was alledged to the nothingneſs, the ſelfiſhneſs of duty; I ſay,

It is certain, whilſt we are in the fleſh, our duties will taſte of the veſſel whence they proceed. Weakneſs, defilements, treachery, hypocriſy will attend them. To this purpoſe, whatever ſome pretend to the contrary, is the complaint of the church, Iſa. lxiv. 6. The chaff oftentimes is ſo mixed with the wheat, that corn can ſcarce be diſcerned. And this know, that the more ſpiritual any man is, the more he ſees of his unſpiritualneſs in his ſpiritual duties. An outſide performance will ſatisfy an outſide Chriſtian, Job abhorred himſelf moſt, when he knew himſelf beſt. The clearer diſcoveries we have had of God, the viler will every thing of ſelf appear. Nay further, duties and performances are oftentimes very ill meaſured by us; and thoſe ſeem to be firſt, which indeed are laſt, and thoſe to be laſt, which indeed are firſt. I do not doubt, but a man, when he hath had diſtractions to wreſtle withal, no outward advantage to further him, no extraordinary provocations of hope, fear or ſorrow on a natural account in his duty, may riſe from his knees with thoughts that he hath done nothing in his duty but provoked God; when there hath been more workings of grace, in contending with the deadneſs caſt on the ſoul by the condition that it is in; than when by the concurrence of moved natural affections, and outward provocations, a frame hath been raiſed, that hath to the party himſelf ſeemed to reach to heaven; ſo that it may be this perplexity about duties, is nothing but what is common to the people of God, and which ought to be no obſtruction to peace and ſettlement.

2. As to the pretence of hypocriſy, you know what is uſually anſwered; it is one thing to do a thing in hypocriſy, another not to do it without a mixture of

of hypocriſy. Hypocriſy, in its long extent, is every thing that for matter or manner comes ſhort of ſincerity. Now our ſincerity is no more perfect than our other graces; ſo that in its meaſure it abides with us, and adheres to all we do. In like manner, it is one thing to do a thing for vain glory, and to be ſeen of men, another not to be able wholly to keep off the ſubtile inſinuations of ſelf and vain glory. He that doth a thing in hypocriſy, and for vain glory, is ſatisfied with ſome corrrupt end obtained tho' he be ſenſible that he ſought ſuch an end. He that doth a thing with a mixture of hypocriſy, that is, with ſome breaches upon the degrees of his ſincerity, with ſome inſenſible advancements in performance on outward conſiderations, is not ſatisfied with a ſelf end attained, and is diſſatisfied with the defect of his ſincerity. In a word, wouldſt thou yet be ſincere, and doſt endeavour ſo to be in private duties, and in publick performances; in praying, hearing, giving alms, zealous actings for God's glory and the love of the ſaints, though theſe duties are not, it may be, ſometimes done without ſenſible hypocriſy, I mean as traced to its moſt ſubtile inſinuations of ſelf and vain glory; yet are they not done in hypocriſy, nor do not denominate the perſons, by whom they are performed, hypocrites? Yet I ſay of this, as of all that is ſpoken before, it is of uſe to relieve us under a troubled condition, of none to ſupport us or encourage us unto an abode in it.

3. Know that God deſpiſeth not ſmall things; he takes notice of the leaſt breathings of our hearts after him, when we ourſelves can ſee and perceive no ſuch thing. He knows the mind of the Spirit, in thoſe workings which are never formed to that height, that we can reflect upon them with our obſervation. Every thing that is of him, is noted in his book, though not in ours; he took notice, that when Sarah was acting unbelief towards him, yet that he ſhewed reſpect and regard to her husband, calling him Lord, Gen. xviii. 12. 1 Pet. iii. 6. And even whilſt his people are ſin-

ning, he can find ſomething in their hearts, words or ways that pleaſeth him, much more in their duties. He is a ſkilful refiner, that can find much gold in that ore where we ſee nothing but lead or clay. He remembers the duties which we forget, and forgets the ſins which we remember: He juſtifies our perſons tho' ungodly, and will alſo our duties tho' not perfectly godly.

4. To give a little further ſupport in reference unto our wretched miſerable duties, and to them that are in perplexities on that account, know, that Jeſus Chriſt takes out whatever is evil and unſavoury out of them, and makes them acceptable. When an unſkilful ſervant gathers many herbs, flowers and weeds in a garden, you gather them out that are uſeful, and caſt the reſt out of ſight. Chriſt deals ſo with our performances. All the ingredients of ſelf that are in them on any account, he takes away, and adds incenſe to what remains, and preſents it to God, Exod. xxviii 39. This is the cauſe that the ſaints at the laſt day, when they meet their own duties and performances, they know them not, they are ſo changed from what they were when they went out of their hand. *Lord when ſaw we thee naked or hungry;* ſo that God accepts a little, and Chriſt makes our little a great deal.

5. Is this an argument to keep thee from believing? The reaſon why thou art no more holy, is, becauſe thou haſt no more faith. If thou haſt no holineſs, it is becauſe thou haſt no faith; holineſs is the purifying of the heart by faith, or our obedience unto the truth. And the reaſon why thou art no more in duty, is, becauſe thou art no more in believing; the reaſon why thy duties are weak and imperfect, is, becauſe thy faith is weak and imperfect. Haſt thou no holineſs, believe that thou mayſt have; haſt thou but a little, or that which is imperceptible, be ſtedfaſt in believing, that thou mayſt abound in obedience, Do not reſolve not to eat thy meat until thou art ſtrong, when thou haſt no means of being ſtrong, but by eating thy bread, which ſtrengthens the heart of man.

Object.

Object. 4. The powerful tumultuating of indwelling ſin or corruption, is another cauſe of the ſame kind of trouble and deſpondency. *They that are Chriſt's have crucified the fleſh with the luſts thereof.* But we find, ſay ſome, ſeveral corruptions working effectually in our hearts, carrying us captive to the law of ſin; they diſquiet with their power, as well as with their guilt. Had we been made partakers of the law of the Spirit of life, we had ere this been more ſet free from the law of ſin and death. Had ſin been pardoned fully, it would have been ſubdued more effectually.

There are three conſiderations which make the actings of indwelling ſin to be ſo perplexing to the ſoul.

1. Becauſe they are unexpected. The ſoul looks not for them upon the firſt great conqueſt made of ſin, and univerſal engagement of the heart unto God. When it firſt ſays, *I have ſworn, and am ſtedfaſtly purpoſed to keep thy righteous judgments*, commonly there is peace at leaſt for a ſeaſon from the diſturbing vigorous actings of ſin. There are many reaſons why it ſhould be ſo: Old things are then paſſed away, all things are become new; and the ſoul, under the power of that univerſal change, is utterly turned away from thoſe things that ſhould foment, ſtir up, provoke or cherriſh any luſt or temptation. Now, when ſome of theſe advantages are paſt, and ſin begins to ſtir and act again, the ſoul is ſurprized, and thinks the work that he hath paſſed through was not true and effectual, but temporary only. Yea, he thinks perhaps that ſin hath more ſtrength than it had before, becauſe he is more ſenſible than he was before. As one that hath a dead arm or limb, whilſt it is mortified, endures deep cuts and launcings, and feels them not; when ſpirits and ſenſe are brought into the place again, he feels the leaſt cut, and may think the inſtruments ſharper than they were before, when all the difference is, that he hath got a quickneſs of ſenſe, which before he had not. It may be ſo with a perſon in this caſe; he may think luſt more powerful than it was before, becauſe he is more ſen-

ſible than he was before. Yea, ſin in the heart, is like a ſnake or ſerpent; you may pull out the ſting of it, and cut it into many pieces; though it can ſting mortally no more, nor move his whole body at once, yet it will move in all its parts, and make an appearance of a greater motion than formerly: So it is with luſt, when it hath received its death's wound, and is cut in pieces, yet it moves in ſo many parts as it were in the ſoul, that it amazes him that hath to do with it; and thus coming unexpectedly, fills the ſpirit oftentimes with diſconſolation.

2. It hath alſo in its actings an univerſality. This alſo ſurprizeth; there is an univerſality in the actings of ſin, even in believers. There is no evil that it will not move to; there is no good that it will not attempt to hinder; no duty that it will not defile: And the reaſon of this is, becauſe we are ſanctified but in part. Not in any part wholly, though ſavingly and truly in every part. There is ſin remaining in every faculty, in all the affections, and ſo may be acting in and towards any ſin that the nature of man is liable unto. Degrees of ſin there are that all regenerate perſons are exempted from; but unto ſolicitations to all kinds of ſin they are expoſed, and this helps on the temptation.

3. It is endleſs and reſtleſs; never quiet, conquering nor conquered; it gives not over, but rebels being overcome, or aſſaults afreſh having prevailed. Oft-times after a victory obtained, and an oppoſition ſubdued, the ſoul is in expectation of reſt and peace from its enemies: But this holds not. It works and rebels again and again, and will do ſo whilſt we live in this world; ſo that no iſſue will be put to our conflict but by death. This is at large handled elſewhere in a treatiſe lately publiſhed on this peculiar ſubject.

Theſe and the like conſiderations attending the actings of indwelling ſin, do oftentimes intangle the ſoul in making a judgment of itſelf, and leave it in the dark as to its ſtate and condition.

A few things ſhall be offered unto this objection alſo.

1. The

1. The ſenſible powerful actings of indwelling ſin, are not inconſiſtent with a ſtate of grace, Gal. v. 17. There are in the ſame perſon contrary principles, the fleſh and the Spirit; theſe are contrary; and there are contrary actings from theſe principles: *The fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, and the ſpirit againſt the fleſh;* and theſe actings are deſcribed to be greatly vigorous in other places. *Luſt wars againſt our ſouls*, James iv. 1. 1 Pet. ii. 11. Now, to war is not to make faint or gentle oppoſition, to be ſlighted and contemned; but it is to go out with great ſtrength, to uſe craft, ſubtilty and force, ſo as to put the whole iſſue to a hazard. So theſe luſts war; ſuch are their actings in and againſt the ſoul. And therefore ſaith the apoſtle, *You cannot do the things that you would;* See Rom. vii. 14, 15, 16, 17. In this conflict indeed the underſtanding is left unconquered; it condemns and diſapproves of the evil led unto; and the will is not ſubdued; it would not do the evil that is preſſed upon it, and there is an hatred or averſation remaining in the affections unto ſin; but yet notwithſtanding, ſin rebels, fights, tumultuates, and leads captive. This objection then may receive this ſpeedy anſwer. Powerful actings and workings, univerſal endleſs ſtrugglings of indwelling ſin, reducing to all that is evil, putting itſelf forth to the diſturbance and diſſettlement of all that is good, is no ſufficient ground to conclude a ſtate of alienation from God; ſee for this the other treatiſe before-mentioned at large.

2. Your ſtate is not at all to be meaſured by the oppoſition that ſin makes to you, but by the oppoſition you make to it; be that never ſo great, if this be good, be that never ſo reſtleſs and powerful, if this be ſincere, you may be diſquieted, you can have no reaſon to deſpond.

I have mentioned theſe things only to give a ſpecimen of the objections which men uſually raiſe up againſt an actual cloſing with the truth inſiſted on to their conſolation: And we have alſo given in upon them

them ſome rules of truth for their relief, not intending in them abſolute ſatisfaction as to the whole of the caſes mentioned, but only to remove the darkneſs raiſed by them ſo out of the way, as that it might not hinder any from mixing the word with faith, that hath been diſpenſed from this bleſſed teſtimony that there is forgiveneſs with God that he may be feared.

VERSES V, VI.

PRoceed we now to the ſecond part of this pſalm, which contains the deportment of a ſin-perplexed ſoul; when by faith it hath diſcovered where its reſt doth ly, and from whom its relief is to be expected; even from the forgiveneſs which is with God, whereof we have ſpoken.

There are two things in general, as was before mentioned, that the ſoul in that condition applies itſelf unto; whereof the firſt reſpects its ſelf, and the other the whole Iſrael of God.

That which reſpects it ſelf, is the deſcription of that frame of heart and ſpirit that he was brought into, upon faith's diſcovery of forgiveneſs in God; with the duties that he applied himſelf unto, the grounds of it, and the manner of its performance, ver. v. vi:

VER. 5. *I wait for the Lord, my ſoul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.*

VER. 6. *My ſoul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning: I ſay more than they that watch for the morning.*

Herein I ſay he deſcribes both his frame of ſpirit, and the duty he applied himſelf to, both as to matter and manner.

I ſhall, as in the method hitherto obſerved, firſt conſider

ſider the reading of the words, then their ſenſe and importance, with the ſuitableneſs of the things mentioned in them, to the condition of the ſoul under conſideration; all which will yield us a foundation of the obſervations that are to be drawn from them.

The words rendered ſtrictly, or word for word, ly thus:

I have earneſtly expected Jehovah; my ſoul hath expected, and in his word have I tarried, or waited.

My ſoul to the Lord, more than (or before) *the watchmen in the morning; the watchmen in the morning;* or unto the morning.

I have waited or expected; the word in the original ſignifies to *expect*, to *hope*, to *wait*, *Verbum hoc eſt, magni animi deſiderio, in aliquem intentum eſſe, & reſpicere ad eum, ex eo pendere.* The word denotes to be intent on any one with great deſire; to behold or regard him, and to depend upon him; and it alſo expreſſeth the earneſt inclination and intention of the will and mind.

Paul ſeems to have expreſſed this word to the full, Rom. viii. 19. by ἀποκαραδοκία *an intent or earneſt expectation*, expreſſing itſelf by putting forth the head, and looking round about with earneſtneſs and diligence. And this is alſo ſignified expreſly by this word, Pſal. lxix. 20. (in the Heb.) *And I looked for ſome to take pity; huc illuc anxie circumſpexi, ſiqui forte me commiſeraturus eſſet.* I looked round about, this way and that way, diligently and ſolicitouſly, to ſee if any would pity me, or lament with me.

Thus, I have waited, is as much as, "I have dili-"gently, with intention of ſoul, mind, will, and af-"fections looked unto God, in earneſt expectation of "that from him, that I ſtand in need of: And which "muſt come forth from the forgiveneſs that is with "him."

2. I have, ſaith he, waited for, or expected JEHOVAH; he uſes the ſame name of God in his expectation, that he firſt fixed on in his application to him.

And it is not this or that means, nor this or that aſſiſt-

aſſiſtance, but it is Jehovah himſelf that he expects and waits for. It is Jehovah himſelf that muſt ſatisfy the ſoul; his favour and loving-kindneſs; and what flows from them. If he come not himſelf, if he gives not himſelf, nothing elſe will relieve.

3. *My ſoul* doth wait or expect; it is no outward duty that I am at, no lip-labour, no bodily work, no formal, cold, careleſs performance of a duty; no, *my ſoul doth wait;* it is ſoul-work, heart work I am at: I wait, I wait with my whole ſoul.

4. *In his word do I hope*, or wait. There is not any thing of difficulty in theſe words; the word uſed (in the Hebrew) ſignifies *to hope, expect, endure, and ſuſtain, with care, ſolicitouſneſs, and endeavours.* Hence the LXX have rendered the word by ὑπέμεινεν; and the vulg. Lat. *ſuſtinui, I have ſuſtained* and *waited* with patience.

And this on the word; or he ſuſtained his ſoul with the word of promiſe that it ſhould not utterly faint. Seing he had made a diſcovery of grace and forgiveneſs, though yet at a great diſtance; he had a ſight of land though he was yet in a ſtorm at ſea; and therefore encourageth himſelf, or his ſoul, that it doth not deſpond.

But yet all this that we have ſpoken reaches not the intenſeneſs of the ſoul of the Pſalmiſt in this his expectation of Jehovah. The earneſt engagement of his ſoul in this duty riſeth up above what he can expreſs. Therefore he proceeds, verſe 6. *My ſoul*, ſaith he, *for the Lord*, (that is, expects him, looks for him, waits for his coming to me in love and with forgiveneſs *more than the watchers for the morning, the watchers for the morning.*

Theſe latter words are variouſly rendred and variouſly expounded. The LXX, and vulgar Latin render them, *from the morning watch until night;* others, *from thoſe that keep the morning watch, unto thoſe that keep the evening watch.* More than the watchers in the morning, more than the watchers in the morning.

The

The words alſo are variouſly expounded. Auſtin would have it to ſignify, the placing of our hopes on the morning of Chriſt's reſurrection, and continuing in them until the night of our own death.

Hierom who renders the words, *from the morning watch to the morning watch,* expounds them of continuing our hopes and expectations from the morning that we are called into the Lord's vineyard, to the morning when we ſhall receive our reward, as much to the ſenſe of the place as the former: And ſo Chryſoſtom interprets of our whole life.

It cannot be denied but that they were led into theſe miſtakes by the tranſlation of the LXX, and that of the vulgar Latin, who both of them have divided theſe words, quite contrary to their proper dependance; and read them thus, *My ſoul expected the Lord. From the morning watch to the night watch, let Iſrael truſt in the Lord.* So making the words to belong to the following exhortation unto others, which are plainly a part of the expreſſion of his own duty.

The words then are a compariſon, and an alluſion unto the watchmen, and may be taken in one of theſe two ſenſes.

1. In things civil; As thoſe who keep the watch of the night, do look, and long for, and expect the morning, when being diſmiſſed from their guard, they may take that ſleep that they need and deſire, which expreſſes a very earneſt expectation, enquiry and deſire: Or,

2. In things ſacred; With the Chaldee paraphraſt, which renders the words, *more than they that look for the morning watch, which they carefully obſerve, that they may offer the morning ſacrifice.* In this ſenſe, as ſaith he, the warders and watchers in the temple, do look diligently after the appearance of the morning, that they may with joy offer the morning ſacrifice in the appointed ſeaſon; ſo, and with more diligence doth my ſoul wait for Jehovah.

You ſee the reading of the words; and how far the ſenſe of them opens itſelf unto us by that conſideration.

Let us then nextly ſee briefly the ſeveral parts of them as they ſtand in relation one to another. We have then,

1. The expreſſion in the duty wherein he was exerciſed, and that is earneſt waiting for Jehovah.

2. The bottom and foundation of that his waiting and expectation; that is, the word of God; the word of promiſe, he diligently hoped in the word.

3. The frame of his ſpirit in, and the manner of his performance of this duty expreſſed.

(1.) In the words themſelves that he uſes, according as we opened them before.

(2.) In the emphatical reduplication, yea, triplication of his expreſſion of it; "I wait for God, my ſoul waiteth for God, my ſoul waiteth for the Lord."

(3.) In the compariſon inſtituted between his diſcharge of his duty, and other performances of a corporal watch, with the greateſt care and diligence; *more than they that watch for the morning:* So that we have,

1. The duty he performed; earneſt waiting and expectation.

2. The object of his waiting, Jehovah himſelf.

3. His ſupportment in that duty, the word of promiſe.

4. The manner of his performance of it.

1. With earneſtneſs and diligence.

2. With perſeverance.

Let us then now conſider the words, as they contain the frame and working of a ſin-entangled ſoul.

Having been raiſed out of his depths by the diſcovery of forgiveneſs in God, as was before declared; yet not being immediately made partaker of that forgiveneſs, as to a comforting ſenſe of it, he gathers up his ſoul from wandering from God, and ſupports it from ſinking under his preſent condition.

It

It is, ſaith he, "Jehovah alone with whom is for-
"giveneſs that can relieve and do me good; his favour,
"his loving-kindneſs, his communication of mercy and
"grace from thence, is that which I ſtand in need of;
"on him therefore do I with all heedfulneſs attend;
"on him do I wait; my ſoul is filled with expectation
"from him: Surely he will come to me, he will come
"and refreſh me; though he ſeem as yet to be afar off.
"and to leave me in theſe depths; yet I have his word
"of promiſe to ſupport and ſtay my ſoul, on which I
"will lean, until I obtain the enjoyment of him, and
"his kindneſs which is better than life."

And this is the frame of a ſin-entangled ſoul, who hath really by faith diſcovered forgiveneſs in God, but is not yet made partaker of a comforting refreſhing ſenſe of it. And we may repreſent it in the enſuing obſervations.

Obſerv. 1. The firſt proper fruit of faith's diſcovery of forgiveneſs in God unto a ſin-diſtreſſed ſoul, is waiting in patience and expectation.

Obſerv. 2. The proper object of a ſin-diſtreſſed ſoul's waiting and expecting, is God himſelf as reconciled in Chriſt; *I have waited for Jehovah.*

Obſerv. 3. The word of promiſe is the ſoul's great ſupportment in waiting for God; *in thy word do I hope.*

Obſerv. 4. Sin-diſtreſſed ſouls wait for God with earneſt intention of mind, diligence, and expectation; from the redoubling of the expreſſion.

Obſerv. 5. Continuance in waiting until God appears to the ſoul, is neceſſary and prevailing; Neceſſary, as that without which we cannot attain aſſiſtance; and prevailing, as that wherein we ſhall never fail.

Obſerv. 6. Eſtabliſhment in waiting where there is no preſent ſenſe of forgiveneſs, yet gives the ſoul much ſecret reſt and comfort; This obſervation ariſeth from the influence that theſe verſes have unto thoſe that follow. The Pſalmiſt having attained thus far, can now

look about him, and begin to deal with others, and exhort them to an expectation of grace and mercy.

And thus, though the ſoul be not abſolutely in the haven of conſolation where it would be, yet it hath caſt out an anchor that gives it eſtabliſhment and ſecurity. Though it be yet toſſed, yet it is ſecured from ſhipwreck, and is rather ſick than in danger: A waiting condition is a condition of ſafety.

Hence it is that he now turns himſelf to others, and upon the experience of the diſcovery that he had made of forgiveneſs in God, and the eſtabliſhment and conſolation he found in waiting on him, he calls upon, and encourageth others to the ſame duty, ver. 7, 8.

The propoſitions laid down, I ſhall briefly paſs thro'; ſtill with reſpect unto the ſtate and condition of the ſoul, repreſented in the Pſalm. Many things that might juſtly be inſiſted on in the improvement of theſe truths, have been anticipated in our former general rules. To them we muſt therefore ſometimes have recourſe; becauſe they muſt not be again repeated. On this account I ſay, we ſhall paſs through them with all briefneſs poſſible; yet ſo, as not wholly to omit any directions that are here tendred unto us, as to the guidance of the ſoul, whoſe condition, and the working of whoſe faith, is here deſcribed. This therefore in the firſt place is propoſed,

> The firſt proper fruit of faith's diſcovery of forgiveneſs in God unto a ſin-diſtreſſed ſoul, is waiting in patience and expectation.

This the Pſalmiſt openly and directly applies himſelf unto, and expreſſeth to have been as his duty, ſo his practice. And he doth it ſo emphatically, as was manifeſted in the opening of the words, that I know not that any duty is any where in the ſcripture ſo recommended and lively repreſented unto us.

You muſt therefore, for the right underſtanding of it, call to mind what hath been ſpoken concerning the ſtate

ſtate of the ſoul enquired into; its depths, intanglements, and ſenſe of ſin, with its application unto God about thoſe things; as alſo remember what hath been delivered about the nature of forgiveneſs, with the revelation that is made of it unto the faith of believers: And that this may be done, where the ſoul hath no refreſhing ſenſe of its own intereſt therein. It knows not that its own ſins are forgiven, although it believes that there is forgiveneſs with God. Now, the principal duty that is incumbent on ſuch a ſoul, is that laid down in the propoſition, namely, patient waiting and expectation.

Two things muſt be done in reference hereunto: *Firſt,* The nature of the duty itſelf is to be declared. And, *Secondly,* The neceſſity and uſefulneſs of its practice is to be evinced and demonſtrated.

For the nature of it, ſomething hath been intimated giving light into it, in the opening of the words here uſed by the Pſalmiſt to expreſs it by. But we may obſerve that theſe duties, as required of us, do not conſiſt in any particular acting of the ſoul, but in the whole ſpiritual frame and deportment of it, in reference unto the end aimed at in and by them. And this waiting, as here and elſewhere commended unto us, and which is comprehenſive of the eſpecial duties of the ſoul in the caſe inſiſted on, and deſcribed, comprehends theſe three things; 1. Quietneſs in oppoſition to haſte, and tumultuating of ſpirit. 2. Diligence in oppoſition to ſpiritual ſloth, deſpondency and neglect of means. 3. Expectation in oppoſition to deſpair, diſtruſt, and other proper immediate actings of unbelief.

1. Quietneſs. Hence this waiting itſelf is ſometimes expreſſed by ſilence. To wait is to be ſilent, Lam. iii. 26. It is good both to hope, (in the Heb.) and to be *ſilent for the ſalvation of the Lord;* that is, to wait quietly, as we have rendred the word. And the ſame word we render ſometimes to reſt, Pſal. xxxvii. 7. *Reſt on the Lord,* (in the Heb.) *be ſilent* unto him; where it is joined with hoping or waiting, as that which belongs

longs unto the nature of it: and ſo in ſundry other places. And this God in an eſpecial manner calleth ſouls unto in ſtraits and diſtreſſes. *In quietneſs and confidence,* (ſaith he) *ſhall be your ſtrength,* Iſa. xxx. 15. And the effect of the righteouſneſs of God by Chriſt, is ſaid to be *quietneſs and aſſurance for ever,* Iſa. xxxii. 17. Firſt quietneſs, and then aſſurance. Now, this ſilence and quietneſs which accompanieth waiting, yea, which is an eſſential part of it, is oppoſed (1.) to haſte; and haſte is the ſoul's undue lifting up itſelf, proceeding from a wearineſs of its condition, to preſs after an end of its troubles, not according to the conduct of the Spirit of God. Thus, when God calleth his people to waiting, he expreſſeth the contrary acting unto this duty, by the lifting up of the ſoul, Hab. ii. 3, 4. *Though the viſion tarry, wait for it; behold his ſoul which is lifted up is not upright in him, but the juſt ſhall live by faith.* God hath given unto the ſoul a viſion of peace, through the diſcovery of that forgiveneſs which is with him; but he will have us wait for an actual participation of it unto reſt and comfort. He that will not do ſo, but lifts up his ſoul, that is, in making haſte beyond the rule and method of the Spirit of God in this matter, his heart is not upright in him, nor will he know what it is to live by faith. This ruins and diſappoints many a ſoul in its attempts for forgiveneſs. The prophet ſpeaking of this matter, tells us, that *He that believeth ſhall not, nor will not, make haſte,* Iſa. xxviii. 16. Which words the apoſtle twice making uſe of, Rom. ix. 33. chap. x. 11. in both places renders them, *Whoſoever believeth on him ſhall not be aſhamed,* or confounded. And that becauſe this haſte turns men off from believing, and ſo diſappoints their hopes, and leaves them unto ſhame and confuſion. Men with a ſenſe of the guilt of ſin, having ſome diſcovery made to them of the reſt, eaſe and peace which they may obtain to their ſouls by forgiveneſs, are ready to catch greedily at it, and to make falſe, unſound, undue applications of it unto themſelves. They cannot bear

bear the yoke that the Lord hath put upon them, but grow impatient under it, and cry with Rachel, *Give me children or I die.* Any way, they would obtain it. Now, as the first duty of such a soul is to apply itself unto waiting; so the first entrance into waiting consists in this silence and quietness of heart and spirit. This is the soul's endeavour to keep itself humble, satisfied with the sovereign pleasure of God in its condition, and refusing all ways and means of rest and peace, but what it is guided and directed unto by the word and spirit.

(2.) As it is opposed unto haste, so it is unto tumultuating thoughts, and vexatious disquietments; the soul is silent, Psal. xxxix. 9. *I was dumb I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.* He redoubles the expression, whereby he sets out his endeavour to quiet and still his soul in the will of God. In the condition discoursed of, the soul is apt to have many tumultuating thoughts, or a multitude of perplexing thoughts of no use or advantage unto it. How they are to be watched against and rejected, was before declared in our general rules: This quietness in waiting will prevent them. And this is the first thing in the duty prescribed.

3. Diligence in opposition unto spiritual sloth, is included in it also. Diligence is the activity of the mind in the regular use of means, for the pursuit of any end proposed. The end aimed at by the soul, is a comforting, refreshing interest in that forgiveness that is with God. For the attaining hereof, there are sundry means instituted and blessed of God. A neglect of them through regardlessness or sloth, will certainly disappoint the soul from attaining that end. It is confessedly so in things natural. He that soweth not, must not think to reap; he that cloatheth not himself, will not be warm; nor he enjoy health, who neglects the means of it. Men understand this to their outward concerns: And although they have a due respect unto the blessing of God, yet they expect not to be rich without industry in their ways. It is so also in things spiritual. God hath

hath appointed one thing to be the means of obtaining another; in the use of them doth he bless us, and from the use of them doth his glory arise; because they are his own appointments. And this diligence wholly respecteth practice, or the regular use of means. A man is said to be diligent in business, to have a diligent hand; though it be an affection of the mind, yet it simply respects practice and operation. This diligence in his waiting David expresseth, Psal. xl. 1. we render it, *I have waited patiently;* that is (in the Heb.) *waiting I have waited,* that is diligently; earnestly in the use of means. So he describes this duty by an elegant similitude, Psal. cxxiii. 2. *Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters; and as the eyes of a maiden to the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until he have mercy on us.* Servants that wait on their masters, and look to their hands, it is to expect an intimation of their minds as to what they would have them do, that they may address themselves unto it. So, saith he, do we wait for mercy; not in a slothful neglect of duties, but in a constant readiness to observe the will of God in all his commands. An instance hereof we have in the spouse, when she was in the condition here described, Cant. iii. 12. She wanted the presence of her Beloved, which amounts to the same state which we have under consideration; for where the presence of Christ is not, there can be no sense of forgiveness. At first she seeks him upon her bed; *By night upon my bed, I sought him whom my soul loveth, I sought him, but I found him not* She seems herein to have gone no further than desires; for she was in her bed, where she could do no more; and the issue is, she found him not; but doth she so satisfy herself; and ly still, waiting untill she should come there unto her? no, she says, *I will rise now, and go about the city, in the streets and in the broad ways, I will seek him whom my soul loveth.* She resolves to put herself into the use of all means, whereby one may be sought that is wanting. In the city, streets, and fields, she would

would enquire after him, And the blessed success she had herein is reported ver. 4. *She found him she held him, she would not let him go.* This then belongs unto the waiting of the soul. Diligence in the use of means, whereby God is pleased ordinarily to communicate a sense of pardon and forgiveness, is a principle part of it. What these means are, is known. Prayer, meditation, reading, hearing of the word, dispensation of the sacraments, they are all appointed to this purpose; they are all means of communicating love and grace to the soul. Be not then heartless or slothful; up and doing; attend with diligence to the word of grace; be fervent in prayer, assiduous in the use of all ordinances of the church, in one or other of them, at one time or other, thou wilt meet with him whom thy soul loveth; and God through him will speak peace unto thee.

3. There is expectation in it, which lies in a direct opposition to all the actings of unbelief in this matter, and is the very life and soul of the duty under consideration. So the Psalmist declares it, Psal. lxii. 5. *My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is only from him.* The soul will not, cannot in a due manner, wait on God, unless it hath expectations from him; unless, as James speaks, he looks to receive somewhat from him, chap. i. 7. The soul in this conditon regards forgiveness, not only as by itself it is desired, but principally as it is by God promised; thence they expect it. This is expressed in the fourth proposition before laid down, namely, that sin-distressed souls wait for God, with earnestness, intention of mind, and expectation. As this ariseth from the redoubling of the expression; so principally from the nature of the comparison that he makes of himself in his waiting with them that watch for the morning. Those that watch for the morning do not only desire it, and prepare for it, but they expect it, and know assuredly that it will come. Though darkness may, for a time, be troublesome, and continue longer than they would desire, yet they know, that the morning hath its appointed time of

return, beyond which it will not tarry; and therefore they look out for its appearance on all occasions: So it is with the soul in this matter. So says David, Psal. v. 3. *I will direct my prayer unto thee,* (in the Heb.) *and look up.* So we; the words before are defective, (in the Heb.) *in the Morning,* or rather every morning, *I will order unto thee.* We restrain this unto prayer: *I will direct my prayer unto thee.* But this was expressed directly in the words foregoing: *In the morning thou shalt hear my voice,* that is, the voice of my prayer and supplications, as it is often supplied. And although the Psalmist doth sometime repeat the same thing in different expressions, yet here he seemeth not so to do, but rather proceeds to declare the general frame of his spirit in walking with God. *I will,* saith he, *order all things towards God,* so as that I may wait upon him in the ways of his appointment; (in the Heb) *and will look up.* It seems in our translation to express his posture in his prayer. But the word is of another importance. It is diligently to look out after that which is coming towards us, a looking out after the accomplishment of our expectation. This is a part of our waiting for God; yea, as was said, the life of it, that which is principally intended in it. The prophet calls it, his standing upon his watch tower, and watching to see what God would speak unto him, Hab. ii. 3. namely, in answer unto that prayer which he put up in his trouble. He is now waiting in expectation of an answer from God. And this is that which poor, weak, trembling sinners are so encouraged unto, Isa. liii. 3. *Strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say unto them that are of a feeble heart, Be strong, fear not, behold your God will come.* Weakness and discouragements are the effects of unbelief. These he would have moved with an expectation of the coming of God unto the soul, according to the promise: And this I say belongs unto the waiting of the soul in the condition described. Such a one doth expect and hope that God will, in his season, manifest himself and his love

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unto him, and give him an experimental sense of a blessed interest in forgiveness. And the accomplishment of this purpose and promise of God, it looks out after continually. It will not despond and be heartless, but stir up and strengthen itself unto a full expectation, to have the desires of his soul satisfied in due time; as we find David doing in places almost innumerable.

This is the duty that in the first place is recommended unto the soul, who is perswaded that there is forgiveness with God, but sees not its own interest therein. Wait on, or for the Lord. And it hath two properties, when it is performed in a due manner; namely, patience and perseverance. By the one, men are kept to the length of God's time; by the other, they are preserved in a due length of their own duty.

And this is that which was laid down in the first proposition drawn from the words; namely, that continuance in watching, until God appears unto the soul, is necessary, as that without which we cannot attain what we look after, and prevailing, as that wherein we shall never fail.

God is not to be limited, nor his times prescribed unto him. We know our way, and the end of our journey; but our stations of especial rest, we must wait for at his mouth, as the people did in the wilderness. When David comes to deal with God in his great distress, he says unto him, *O Lord, thou art my God, my times are in thine hand*, Psal. xxxi. 14, 15. His times of trouble, and of peace, of darkness and of light, he acknowledged to be in the hand, and at the disposal of God; so that it was his duty to wait his time and season for his share and portion in them.

During this state the soul meets with many oppositions, difficulties and perplexities, especially if its darkness be of long continuance; as with some it abides many years, with some all the days of their lives. Their hope being hereby deferred, makes their hearts sick, and their spirits oftentimes to faint; and this fainting is a defect in waiting, for want of perseverance and

continuance, which frustrates the end of it. So David, Psal. xxvii. 13. *I had fainted unless I had believed, to see the goodness of the Lord.* Had I not received supportment by faith, I had fainted. And wherein doth that consist? what was the fainting which he had been overtaken withal, without the supportment mentioned? it was a relinquishment of waiting on God, as he manifests by the exhortation which he gives to himself and others, ver. 14. *Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart; wait I say on the Lord.* Wait with courage and resolution that thou faint not. And the apostle puts the blessed event of faith and obedience upon the avoidance of this evil, Gal. vi. 9. *We shall reap if we faint not.* Hence we have both encouragements given against it, and promises that in the way of God we shall not be overtaken with it. *Consider the Lord Christ*, saith the apostle, *the Captain of your salvation, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds*, Heb. xii. 3. Nothing else can cause you to come short of the mark aimed at. And they saith the prophet, *who wait on the Lord*, that is, in the use of the means by him appointed, *shall not faint*, Isa. xl, 11.

This continuance then in waiting is to accompany this duty, upon the account of both the things mentioned in the proposition; that it is indispensibly necessary on our own account, and it is assuredly prevailing in the end; it will not fail.

1. It is necessary. They that watch for the morning, to whose frame and actings the waiting of the soul for God is compared, give not over until the light doth appear, or if they do, if they are wearied and faint, and so cease watching, all their former pains will be lost, and they will ly down in disappointments: So will it be with the soul that deserts its watch, and faints in its waiting. If upon the eruption of new lusts or corruptions; if upon the return of old temptations, or the assaults of new ones; if upon a revived perplexing sense of guilt, or on the tediousness of working or labouring so

so much and so long in the dark, the soul begins to say in itself, I have looked for light, and behold darkness; for peace, and yet trouble cometh; the summer is past, the harvest is ended, and I am not relieved; such and such blessed means have been enjoyed, and yet I have not attained rest, and so gives over its waiting in the way and course before prescribed, it will at length utterly fail, and come short of the grace aimed at. *Thou hast laboured and hast not fainted*, brings in the reward, Rev. ii. 3.

2. Perseverance in waiting is assuredly prevalent; and this renders it a necessary part of the duty itself. If we continue to wait for the vision of peace, it will come, it will not tarry, but answer our expectation of it: Never soul miscarried that abode in this duty unto the end. The joys of heaven may sometimes prevent consolations in this life; God sometimes gives in the full harvest without sending of the first fruits aforehand, but spiritual or eternal peace and rest is the infallible end of permanent waiting for God.

This is the duty that the Psalmist declares himself to be engaged in, upon the encouraging discovery which was made unto him of forgiveness with God. *There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared; I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope:* And this is that which in the like condition is required of us. This is the great direction which was given us in the example and practice of the Psalmist, as to our duty and deportment in the condition described. This was the way whereby he rose out of his depths, and escaped out of his entanglements; Is this then the state of any of us? Let such take directions from hence.

1. Encourage your souls unto waiting on God. Do new fears arise, do old disconsolations continue, say unto your souls, yet wait on God; why are you cast down, O our souls, and why are you disquieted within us? hope in God, for we shall yet praise him, who is the health of our countenance, and our God, as the Psamist doth

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in the like case, Psal. xliii. 5. So he speaks elsewhere; Wait on God, and be of good courage; shake of sloth, rouze up yourselves from under despondencies, let not fears prevail. This is the only way for success, and it will assuredly be prevalent: Oppose this resolution to every discouragement, and it will give new life to faith and hope: Say, *My flesh faileth, and my heart faileth; but God is the rock of my heart, and my portion for ever,* as Psal. lxxiii. 26. Though thy perplexed thoughts have even wearied and worn out the outward man, as in many they do, so that flesh faileth; and though thou hast no refreshing evidence from within, from thyself, or thy own experience, so that thy heart faileth; yet resolve to look unto God, there is strength in him, and satisfaction in him, for the whole man; he is a rock, and a portion: This will strengthen things which otherwise will be ready to die: This will keep life in thy course, and stir thee up to plead it with God in an acceptable season when he will be found. Job carried up his condition unto a supposition that God might slay him; that is is, add one stroke, one rebuke unto another, until he was consumed; and so take him out of the world in darkness and in sorrow: Yet he resolved to trust, to hope, to wait on him, as knowing that he should not utterly miscarry in so doing. This frame the church expresseth so admirably, that nothing can be added thereunto, Lam. iii. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26. *Thou hast removed my soul far off from peace, I forgat prosperity. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord; Remembring mine affliction and my misery, my wormwood and my gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: Great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation*

vation of the Lord. We have here both the condition and the duty insisted on, with the method of the soul's actings, in reference unto the one and the other, fully expressed. The condition is sad and bitter, the soul is in depths, far from peace and rest, ver. 14. In this state it is ready utterly to faint, and to give all for lost and gone, both strength for the present, and hopes for the future, ver. 18. This makes its condition full of sorrow and bitterness, and its own thoughts become unto it like wormwood and gall, ver. 19, 20. But doth he ly down under the burden of all this trouble? doth he despond, and give over? No, saith he, I call to mind, that there is forgiveness with God, grace, mercy, goodness, for the relief of distressed souls, such as are in my condition, ver. 21, 22, 23. Thence the conclusion is, that as all help is to be looked for, all relief expected from him alone; so it is good that a man should quietly wait, and hope for the salvation of God. This he stirs up himself unto, as the best, as the most blessed course for his deliverance.

2. Remember, that diligent use of the means, for the end aimed at, is a necessary concomitant of, and ingredient unto waiting on God. Take in the consideration of this doctrine also. Do not think to be freed from your intanglements by restless, heartless desiring that it were otherwise with you: Means are to be used, that relief may be obtained. What those means are, is known unto all: Mortification of sin, prayer, meditation, due attendance upon all gospel ordinances; conferring in general about spiritual things, advising in particular about our own state and condition, with such who, having received the tongue of the learned, are able to speak a word in season to them that are weary, are required to this purpose. And in all these are diligence and perseverance to be exercised; or in vain shall men desire a delivery from their entanglements.

God

God the proper object of the soul's waiting in its distresses and depths.

We have seen what the duty is, intended in the proposition; we are nextly to consider the reason also of it, why this is the great, first, and principle duty of souls, who in their depths have it discovered unto them that there is forgiveness with God; and the reason hereof is, that which is expressed in our second observation before-mentioned, namely,

That the proper object of a sin-distressed soul's waiting and expectation, is God himself as revealed in Christ. I have, saith the Psalmist, waited for Jehovah: It is not this or that mercy or grace, this or that help or relief; but it is Jehovah himself that I wait for.

Here then we must do two things; *First*, Shew in what sense God himself is the object of the waiting of the soul. *Secondly*, How it appears from hence, that waiting is so necessary a duty.

First, It is the Lord himself, Jehovah himself, that the soul waiteth for. It is not grace, mercy, or relief absolutely considered, but the God of all grace and help, that is the full adequate object of the soul's waiting and expectation; only herein he is not considered absolutely in his own nature, but as there is forgiveness with him. What is required hereunto, hath been at large before declared. It is as he is revealed in and by Jesus Christ. As in him he hath found a ransom, and accepted the atonement for sinners in his blood; as he is a God in covenant; so he is himself the object of our waiting. And that,

1. Because all troubles, depths, entanglements arise from, (1.) The absence of God from the soul; and (2.) From his displeasure.

The absence of God from the soul, by his departure, withdrawing, or hiding himself from it, is that which principally casts the soul into its depths. *Wo unto them* (saith the Lord) *when I depart from them*, Hos. ix. 12.

And

And this wo, this sorrow, doth not attend only an universal, a total departure of God from any; but that also which is gradual or partial in some things, in some seasons. When God withdraws his enlightning, his refreshing, his comforting presence, as to any ways or means whereby he hath formerly communicated himself unto the souls of any; then wo unto them, sorrows will befal them, and they will fall into depths and entanglements. Now, this condition calls for waiting. If God be withdrawn, if he hides himself, what hath the soul to do, but to wait for his return? So saith the prophet, Isa. viii. 17. *I will wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.* If God hide himself, this is the natural and proper duty of the soul, to wait and to look for him: Other course of relief it cannot apply itself unto. What this waiting is, and wherein it doth consist, hath been declared. Patient seeking of God in the ways of his appointment if comprised in it: This the prophet expresseth in that word, *I will look for him;* indeed the same in the original with that in the psalm, *and I will earnestly look out after him with expectation of his return unto me.*

2. A sense of God's displeasure is another cause of these depths and troubles, and of the continuance of the soul in them, notwithstanding it hath made a blessed discovery by faith that there is with him forgiveness; this hath been so fully manifested through the whole preceeding discourse, that it need not again be insisted on. All hath respect unto sin; and the reason of the trouble that ariseth from sin, is because of the displeasure of God against it. What then is the natural posture and frame of the soul towards God as displeased? shall he contend with him? shall he harden himself against him? shall he despise his wrath and anger, and contemn his threatnings? or shall he hide himself from him, and so avoid the effects of his wrath? who knows not how ruinous and pernicious to the soul such courses would be; and how many are ruined by them every

day? Patient waiting is the ſoul's only reſerve on this account alſo. And,

Secondly, This duty in the occaſion mentioned is neceſſary, upon the account of the greatneſs and ſovereignty of him with whom we have to do: *My ſoul waiteth for Jehovah.* Indeed waiting is a duty that depends on the diſtance that is between the perſons concerned in it, namely, he that waiteth, and he that is waited on, ſo the Pſalmiſt informs us, Pſal. cxxiii. 2 It is an action like that of ſervants and handmaids towards their maſters or rulers. And the greater this diſtance is, the more cogent are the reaſons of this duty on all occaſions. And becauſe we are practically averſe from the due performance of this duty, or at leaſt quickly grow weary of it, notwithſtanding our full conviction of its neceſſity, I ſhall a little inſiſt on ſome ſuch conſiderations of God and ourſelves, as may not only evince the neceſſity of this duty, but alſo ſatisfy us of its reaſonableneſs; that by the firſt we may be engaged into it, and by the latter preſerved in it.

Two things we may to this purpoſe conſider in God, in Jehovah, whom we are to wait for. *Firſt*, His Being, and the abſolute and eſſential properties of his nature. *Secondly*, Thoſe attributes of his nature which reſpect his dealing with us; both which are ſuited to beget in us affections, and a frame of ſpirit complaint with the duty propoſed.

Conſiderations of God rendering our waiting on him reaſonable and neceſſary.-------His glorious Being.

First, Let us conſider the infinite glorious Being of Jehovah, with his abſolute incommunicable eſſential excellencies; and then try whether it doth not become us in every condition to wait for him, and eſpecially in that under conſideration. This courſe God himſelf took with Job, to recover him from his diſcontents and complaints, to reduce him to quietneſs and waiting. He

He ſets before him his own glorious greatneſs, as manifeſted in the works of his power, that thereby, being convinced of his own ignorance, weakneſs and infinite diſtance in all things from him, he might humble his ſoul into the moſt ſubmiſſive dependance on him, and waiting for him. And this he doth accordingly, chap. xlii. 6. *I abhor* (ſaith he,) *myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes.* His ſoul now comes to be willing to be at God's diſpoſal, and therein he found preſent reſt, and a ſpeedy healing of his condition. It is the *high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whoſe name is holy,* Iſa. lvii. 15. with whom we have now to do: He that *ſitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants of it are as graſhoppers before him; yea, the nations are as the drop of the bucket, and are counted as the ſmall duſt of the ballance: He takes up the iſles as a very little thing; all nations before him are as nothing, they are counted unto him leſs than nothing, and vanity,* Iſa. xl. 15, 17, 22: To what end doth the Lord ſet forth and declare his glorious greatneſs and power? It is that all might be brought to truſt in him, and to wait for him, as at large is declared in the cloſe of the chapter. For ſhall graſhoppers, a drop of the bucket, duſt of the balance, things leſs than nothing, repine againſt, or wax weary of the will of the immenſe, glorious and lofty One? He that taketh up all the iſles as a very little thing, may ſurely, if he pleaſe, deſtroy, caſt and forſake one iſle, one city in an iſle, one perſon in a city; and we are before him but ſingle perſons. Serious thoughts of this infinite all glorious Being, will either quiet our ſouls, or overwhelm them. All our wearineſs of his diſpenſations towards us, ariſes from ſecret imaginations, that he is ſuch a one as ourſelves; one that is to do nothing but what ſeems good in our eyes. But if we cannot comprehend his Being, we cannot make rules to judge of his ways and proceedings. And how ſmall a portion is it that we know of God? The neareſt approaches of our reaſons and imaginations, leaves us ſtill at an infinite diſtance from him: And indeed what we

ſpeak of his greatneſs, we know not well what it ſignifies, we only declare our reſpect unto that which we believe, admire and adore, but are not able to comprehend. All our thoughts come as ſhort of his excellent greatneſs, as our natures do of his; that is, infinitely. Behold the univerſe, the glorious fabric of heaven and earth; how little is it that we know of its beauty, order and diſpoſal? yet was it all the product of the word of his mouth; and with the ſame facility can he, when he pleaſeth, reduce it to its primative nothing. And what are we poor worms of the earth, an inconſiderable unknown part of the lower ſeries and order of the works of his hands, few in number, fading in condition, unregarded unto the reſidue of our fellow creatures, that we ſhould ſubduct ourſelves from under any kind of his dealings with us, or be weary of waiting for his pleaſure? This he preſſeth on us, Pſal. xlvi. 10. *Be ſtill and know that I am God.* Let there be no more repinings, no more diſputings, continue waiting in ſilence and patience; conſider who I am; *Be ſtill, and know that I am God.*

Further, to help us in this conſideration, let us a little alſo fix our minds towards ſome of the glorious, eſſential, incommunicable properties of his nature diſtinctly; as,

(1.) His eternity. This Moſes propoſeth to bring the ſouls of believers to ſubmiſſion, truſt and waiting, Pſal. xc. 1. *From everlaſting to everlaſting thou art God.* One that hath his being and ſubſiſtance not in a duration of time, but in eternity itſelf: So doth Habakkuk alſo, chap. i. 12. *My Lord, my God, my holy One, art thou not from everlaſting:* And hence he draws his concluſion againſt making haſte in any condition, and for tarrying and waiting for God. The like conſideration is managed by David alſo, Pſal. cii. 27. How unconceiveable is this glorious divine property unto the thoughts and minds of men? how weak are the ways and terms whereby they go about to expreſs it? One ſays, it is a *nunc ſtans*; another, that it is a perpetual duration.

duration. He that ſays moſt, only ſignifies what he knows of what it is not. We are of yeſterday, change every moment, and are leaving our ſtation to-morrow. God is ſtill the ſame, was ſo before the world was, from eternity. And now I cannot think what I have ſaid, but only have intimated what I adore. The whole duration of the world from the beginning unto the end, takes up no ſpace in this eternity of God. For how long ſoever it hath continued, or may yet continue, it will all amount but to ſo many thouſand years, ſo long a time; and time hath no place in eternity. And for us who have in this matter to do with God, what is our continuance unto that of the world? a moment as it were in compariſon of the whole. When mens lives were of old prolonged beyond the date and continuance of empires or kingdoms now, yet this was the winding up of all; ſuch a one lived ſo many years, and then he died, Gen. v. And what are we poor worms, whoſe lives are meaſured by inches, in compariſon of their ſpan? what are we before the eternal God; God always immutably ſubſiſting in his own infinite Being? A real conſideration hereof will ſubdue the ſoul into a condition of dependance on him, and of waiting for him.

(2.) The immenſity of his eſſence, and his omnipreſence is the ſame conſideration. *Do not I fill heaven and earth*, ſaith the Lord, Jer. xxiii. 24. *The heavens, even the heavens of heavens*, the ſupreme and moſt comprehenſive created being cannot contain him, ſaith Solomon. In his infinitely glorious Being, he is preſent with, and indiſtant from all places, things, times, all the works of his hands; and is no leſs glorioufly ſubſiſting where they are not. God is where heaven and earth are not, no leſs than where they are; and where they are not, is himſelf; Where there is no place, no ſpace, real or imaginary, God is; for place and imagination have nothing to do with immenſity: And he is preſent every where in the creation; where I am writing, where you are reading; he is preſent with you, indiſtant from you. The thoughts of mens hearts for the moſt

moſt part are, that God, as to his eſſence, is heaven only; and it is well if ſome think he is there, ſeeing they live and act as if there were neither God nor Devil, but themſelves. But on theſe apprehenſions, ſuch thoughts are ready ſecretly to ariſe, and effectually to prevail, as they were expreſſed, Job xxii. 13, 14. *How doth God know? can he judge through the dark? Thick clouds are as a covering unto him, that he ſeeth not; and he walketh in the circuit of the heavens.* Apprehenſions of God's diſtance from men harden them in their ways: But it is utterly otherwiſe; God is every where; and a man may, on all occaſions, ſay with Jacob, *God is in this place, and I knew it not.* Let the ſoul then, who is thus called to wait on God, exerciſe itſelf with thoughts about this immenſity of his Nature and Being. Comprehend it, fully underſtand it, we can never: But the conſideration of it will give that awe of his greatneſs upon our hearts, as that we ſhall learn to tremble before him, and to be willing to wait for him in all things.

(3.) Thoughts of the holineſs of God, or infinite ſelf-purity of this eternal immenſe being, are ſingularly uſeful to the ſame purpoſe. This is that which Eliphaz affirms that he received by viſion, to reply to the complaint and impatience of Job, chap. xiv. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19. After he hath declared his viſion, with the manner of it, this he affirms to the revelation that by voice was made unto him: *Shall mortal man be more juſt than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker? Behold he puts no truſt in his ſervants, and his angels he chargeth with folly. How much leſs on them that dwell in houſes of clay, whoſe foundation is in the duſt, who are cruſhed before the moth?* If the ſaints and angels in heaven do not anſwer this infinite holineſs of God in their moſt perfect condition; is it meet for the worms of the earth to ſuppoſe, that any thing which proceeds from him is not abſolutely holy and perfect, and ſo beſt for them? This is the fiery property of the nature of God, whence he is called a conſuming fire, and everlaſting burnings: And the law whereon he had impreſſed

preſſed ſome repreſentation of it, is called a fiery law, as that which will conſume and burn up whatever is perverſe and evil. Hence the Prophet, who had a repreſentation of the glory of God in a viſion, and heard the Seraphims proclaiming his holineſs, cried out, *Wo is me, for I am undone, becauſe I am a man of unclean lips*, Iſa. vi. 5. He thought it impoſſible that he ſhould bear that near approach of the holineſs of God. And with the remembrance hereof doth Joſhua ſtill the people with the terror of the Lord, chap. xiv. 19. Let ſuch ſouls then, as are under troubles and perplexities on any account, endeavour to exerciſe their thoughts about this infinite purity and fiery holineſs of God; they will quickly find it their wiſdom to become as weaned children before him, and content themſelves with what he ſhall guide unto them, which is to wait for him. This fiery holineſs ſtreams from this throne, Dan. vii. 10. and would quickly conſume the whole creation, as now under the curſe and ſin, were it not for the interpoſing of Jeſus Chriſt.

(4.) His glorious majeſty, as the ruler of all the world. Majeſty relates unto government, and it calls us to ſuch an awe of him as doth render our waiting for him comely and neceſſary. God's throne is ſaid to be in heaven, and there principally do the glorious beams of his terrible majeſty ſhine forth. But he hath alſo made ſome repreſentation of it on the earth, that we might learn to fear before him. Such was the appearance that he gave of his glory in the giving of the law, whereby he will judge the world, and condemn the tranſgreſſors of it, who obtain not an acquitment in the blood of Jeſus Chriſt. See the deſcription of it in Exod. xix. 16, 18. *So terrible was the ſight hereof, that Moſes himſelf ſaid, I exceedingly fear and quake*, Heb. xii. 21. And what effect it had upon all the people is declared, Exod. xx. 18, 19. They were not able to bear it, although they had good aſſurance that it was for their benefit and advantage, that he ſo drew nigh, and manifeſted his glory unto them. Are we not ſatisfied with

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our condition? cannot we wait under his preſent diſpenſations? Let us think how we may approach unto his preſence, or ſtand before his glorious Majeſty. Will not the dread of his excellency fall upon us? Will not this terror make us afraid? Shall we not think his way beſt, and his time beſt, and that our duty is to be ſilent before him? And the like manifeſtation hath he made of his glory, as the great Judge of all, upon the throne, unto ſundry of the Prophets; as unto Iſaiah, chap. vi. 1, 2, 3, 4. to Ezekiel, chap. i. to Daniel, chap. vii. 9, 10. to John, Rev. i. Read the places attentively, and learn to tremble before him. Theſe are not things that are foreign unto us. This God is our God. The ſame throne of his greatneſs and majeſty is ſtill eſtabliſhed in the heavens. Let us then, in all our haſtes and heats, that our ſpirits in any condition are prone unto, preſent ourſelves before this throne of God, and then conſider what will be beſt for us to ſay or do; what frame of heart and ſpirit will become us, and be ſafeſt for us. All this glory doth encompaſs us every moment, altho' we perceive it not. And it will be but a few days before all the vails and ſhades that are about us, ſhall be taken away and depart. And then ſhall all this glory appear unto us unto endleſs bliſs, or everlaſting woe. Let us therefore know, that nothing in our dealings with him doth better become us, than ſilently for to wait for him, and what he will ſpeak unto us in our depths and ſtraits.

5. It is good to conſider the inſtances that God hath given of this his infinite greatneſs, power, majeſty, and glory. Such was his mighty work of creating all things out of nothing. We dwell on little mole-hills in the earth, and yet we know the leaſt part of the exellency of that ſpot of ground, which is given us for our habitation here below. But what is it unto the whole habitable world, and the fulneſs thereof? And what an amazing thing is its greatneſs, with the wide and large ſea, with all ſorts of creatures therein! The leaſt of theſe hath a beauty, a glory, an excellency, that the utmoſt of

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our enquiries end in admiration of. And all this is but the earth, the lower depreſſed part of the world. What ſhall we ſay concerning the heavens over us, and all thoſe creatures of light that have their habitations in them? Who can conceive the beauty, order, uſe and courſe of them? The conſideration hereof cauſed the Pſalmiſt to cry out, *Lord, our Lord, how excellent and glorious art thou?* Pſal. viii. 1. And what is the riſe, ſpring, and cauſe of theſe things? Are they not all the effect of the word of the power of this glorious God? And doth he not in them, and by them, ſpeak us into a reverence of his greatneſs? The like alſo may be ſaid concerning his mighty and ſtrange works of providence in the rule of the world. Is not this he who brought the flood of old upon the world of ungodly men? is it not he who conſumed Sodom and Gommorah with fire from heaven, ſetting them forth as examples unto them that ſhould afterwards live ungodly, ſuffering the vengeance of eternal fire? Is it not he who deſtroyed Egypt with his plagues, and drowned Pharoah with his hoſt in the red ſea? Is it not he, one of whoſe ſervants ſlew an hundred and fourſcore and five thouſand in Senacherib's army in one night? That opened the earth to ſwallow up Dathan and Abiram? And ſent out fire from the altar to devour Nadab and Abihu? And have not all ages been filled with ſuch inſtances of his greatneſs and power?

The end why I have inſiſted on theſe things, is, to ſhew the reaſonableneſs of the duty which we are preſſing unto; namely, to wait on God quietly and patiently in every condition of diſtreſs. For what elſe becomes us when we have to do with this great and holy One? A due conſideration of theſe things will exceedingly influence our minds thereunto.

Secondly, This waiting for God reſpecteth the whole of the condition expreſſed in the Pſalm, and this containeth not only ſpiritual depths about ſin, which we have at large inſiſted on, but alſo providential depths, depths of trouble or affliction; that we may be exerciſed withal

withal in the holy wiſe providence of God. In reference alſo unto theſe, waiting in patience and ſilence is our duty. And there are two conſiderations that will aſſiſt us in this duty with reſpect unto ſuch depths, that is, of trouble or affliction. And the *firſt* of theſe, is, the conſideration of thoſe properties of God, which he exerciſeth in an eſpecial manner in all his dealings with us, and which in all our troubles we are principally to regard. The *ſecond* is, the conſideration of ourſelves, what we are, and what we have deſerved.

Let us begin with the former; and there are four things in God's diſpenſations towards us, and dealing with us, that in this matter we ſhould conſider, all ſuited to work in us the end aimed at. The firſt is his ſovereignty: This he declares, this we are to acknowledge and ſubmit unto in all the great and dreadful diſpenſations of his providence, in all his dealings with our ſouls. May he not do what he will with his own? Who ſhall ſay unto him, What doſt thou? Or if they do ſo, what ſhall give them countenance in their ſo doing? He made all this world of nothing, and could have made another, more, or all things quite otherwiſe than they are. It would not ſubſiſt one moment without his omnipotent ſupportment. Nothing would be continued in its place, courſe, uſe, without his effectual influence and countenance. If any thing can be, live, or act a moment without him, we may take free leave to diſpute its diſpoſal with him, and to haſte unto the accompliſhment of our deſires; but from the angels in heaven to the worms of the earth, and the graſs of the field, all depend on him and his power continually. Why was this part of the creation an angel, that a worm, this a man, that a brute beaſt? Is it from their own choice, deſigning, or contrivance, or brought about by their own wiſdom? Or is it merely from the ſovereign will and pleaſure of God? And what a madneſs is it, to repine againſt what he doth, ſeeing all things are, as he makes them, and diſpoſeth them, nor can be otherwiſe: Even the repiner himſelf

himſelf hath his being and ſubſiſtence upon his mere pleaſure. This ſovereignty of God, Elihu pleads in his dealings with Job, chap. xxxiii. 8, 9, 10, 11. He apprehended that Job had reaſoned againſt God's ſevere diſpenſations towards him, and that he did not humble himſelf under his mighty hand wherewith he was exerciſed, nor wait for him in a due manner; and therefore what doth he propoſe unto him, to bring him unto this duty? what doth he reply unto his reaſonings and complaints? *Behold* (ſaith he, verſe 12.) *in this thou art not juſt, I will anſwer thee; God is greater than man.* Verſe 13. *Why doſt thou ſtrive againſt him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.* Be it that in other things thou art juſt and innocent, that thou art free from the things wherewith thy friends have charged thee; yet in this matter thou art not juſt; it is neither juſt nor equal, that any man ſhould complain of, or repine againſt any of God's diſpenſations: Yea, but I ſuppoſe that theſe dealings of God are very grievous, very dreadful, ſuch as he hath, it may be, ſcarce exerciſed towards any from the foundation of the world; to be utterly deſtroyed, and conſumed in a day, in all relations and enjoyments, and that at a time and ſeaſon, when no ſuch thing was looked for, or provided againſt; to have a ſenſe of ſin revived on the conſcience after pardon obtained, as it is with me; all is one, ſaith he, if thou complaineſt thou art not juſt; And what reaſon doth he give thereof; Why, God is greater than man; infinitely ſo, in proper and ſovereign glory; he is ſo abſolutely therein, that he giveth no account of any of his matters; and what folly, what injuſtice, is it to complain of his proceedings. Conſider his abſolute dominion over the works of his hands, over thyſelf, and all that thou haſt; his infinite diſtance from thee, and greatneſs above thee, and then ſee whether it be juſt or no to repine againſt what he doth. And he purſues the ſame conſideration, chap. xxxiv. 18, 19. If when kings and princes rule in righteouſneſs, it is a contempt of their authority to ſay unto them, they are wicked and ungodly, then wilt thou

ſpeak againſt him, contend with him, *that accepteth not the perſons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor; for they are all the work of his hands?* and verſe 29. *When he giveth quietneſs, who can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who can behold him? whether it be done againſt a nation, or againſt a man only:* All is one, whatever God doth, and towards whomſoever, be they many or few, an whole nation or city, or one ſingle perſon, be they high or low, rich or poor, good or bad, all are the works of his hands, and he may deal with them, as ſeems good unto him. And this man alone, as God afterwards declares, made uſe of the right and proper mediums to take off Job from complaining, and to compoſe his ſpirit to reſt and peace, and to bring him to wait patiently on God: For whereas his other friends injuriouſly charged him with hypocriſy, and that he had in an eſpecial manner above other men deſerved thoſe judgments of God which he was exerciſed withal; he who was conſcious unto his own integrity, was only provoked and exaſperated by their arguings, and ſtirred up to plead his own innocency and uprightneſs. But this man allowing him the plea of his integrity, calls him to the conſideration of the greatneſs and ſovereignty of God, againſt which there is no riſing up. And this God himſelf afterwards calls him unto.

Deep and ſerious thoughts of God's ſovereignty, and abſolute dominion and authority over all the works of his hands, are an effectual means to work the ſoul unto this duty. Yea, this is that which we are to bring our ſouls to. Let us conſider with whom we have to do; are not we, and all concernments, in his hands, as the clay in the hand of the potter? and may he not do what he will with his own? ſhall we call him unto an account? is not what he doth good and holy, becauſe he doth it? do any repining thoughts againſt the works of God ariſe in our hearts? are any complaints ready to break out of our mouths? Let us lay our hands on our hearts, and our mouths in the duſt, with thoughts of his greatneſs and

and abſolute ſovereignty, and it will work our whole ſouls into a better frame.

And this extends itſelf unto the manners, times and ſeaſons of all things whatever. As in earthly things: If God will bring a dreadful judgment of fire upon a people, a nation; Ah! why muſt it be London? If on London, why ſo terrible, raging, and unconquerable? why the city not the ſuburbs? why my houſe, not my neighbour's? why had ſuch a one help, and I none? All theſe things are wholly to be referred to God's ſovereign pleaſure; there alone can the ſoul of man find reſt and peace. It is ſo in ſpiritual diſpenſations alſo.

Thus Aaron, upon the ſudden death of his two eldeſt ſons, being minded by Moſes of God's ſovereignty and holineſs, immediately held his peace, or quietly humbled himſelf under his mighty hand, Lev. x. 3, 4. And David, when things were brought into extreme confuſion by the rebellion of Abſalom, followed by the ungodly multitude of the whole nation, relinquiſheth all other arguments and pleas, and lets go complaints, in a reſignation of himſelf and all his concernments unto the abſolute pleaſure of God, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. And this in all our extremities muſt we bring our ſouls unto, before we can attain any reſt or peace, or the leaſt comfortable perſuaſion, that we may not yet fall under greater ſeverities in the juſt indignation of God againſt us.

2. The wiſdom of God is alſo to be conſidered, and ſubmitted unto. Job ix. 4. *He is wiſe in heart; who hath hardened himſelf againſt him, and proſpered?* This the prophet joins with his greatneſs and ſovereignty, Iſa. xl. 12, 13, 14. *There is no ſearching of his underſtanding*, ver. 28. And the apoſtle winds up all his conſiderations of the works of God in an holy admiration of his knowledge and wiſdom, whence his judgment becomes unſearchable, and his ways paſt finding out, Rom. xi. 33, 34. He ſeeth and knoweth all things, in all their cauſes, effects, conſequences and circumſtances, in their outmoſt reach and tendency, in their correſpondencies

dencies one unto another, and ſuitableneſs unto his own glory, and ſo alone judgeth aright of all things. The wiſeſt of men, as David ſpeaks, walk in a ſhade. We ſee little, we know little, and that but of a very few things, and in an imperfect manner; and that of their preſent appearances, abſtracted from their iſſues, ſucceſſes, ends, and relations unto other things. And if we ſhould be further wiſe in the works of God, we ſhall be found to be like the wild aſſes colt. What is good for us or the church of God, what is evil to it or us, we know not at all; but all things are open and naked unto God. The day will come indeed, wherein we ſhall have ſuch a proſpect of the works of God, ſee one thing ſo ſet againſt another, as to find goodneſs, beauty, and order in them all; that they were all done in number, weight and meaſure, that nothing could have been otherwiſe, without an abridgment of his glory, and diſadvantage of them that believe in him. But for the preſent, all our wiſdom conſiſts in referring all unto him. He who doth theſe things is infinitely wiſe; he knows what he doth, and why, and what will be the end of all. We are apt, it may be, to think, that at ſuch ſeaſons all things will go to wrack with ourſelves, with the church, or with the whole world; how can this breach be repaired, this loſs made up, this ruin recovered? Peace is gone, trade is gone, our ſubſtance is gone, the church is gone, all is gone, confuſion and utter deſolation ly at the door. But if a man, who is unſkilled and unexperienced ſhould be at ſea, it may be every time the veſſel, wherein he is, ſeems to decline on either ſide, he would be apt to conceive they ſhould be all caſt away; but yet, if he be not childiſhly timorous, when the maſter ſhall tell him, that there is no danger, bid him truſt to his ſkill, and it ſhall be well with him, it will yield quietneſs and ſatisfaction. We are indeed in a ſtorm, the whole earth ſeems to reel and ſtagger like a drunken man: but yet our ſouls may reſt in the infinite ſkill and wiſdom of the great Pilot of the whole creation, who ſteers all things

things according to the counſel of his will: His works are manifold; in wiſdom hath he made all theſe things, Pſal. civ. 24. and in the ſame wiſdom doth he diſpoſe of them. *All theſe things come forth from the Lord of Hoſts, who is wonderful in counſel, and excellent in working*, Iſa. xxviii. 29. What is good, meet, uſeful for us, for ours, for the churches, for the city, for the land of our nativity, he knows, and of creatures not one. This infinite wiſdom of God alſo are we therefore to reſign and ſubmit ourſelves unto: His hand in all his works is guided by infinite wiſdom. In thoughts thereof, in humbling ourſelves thereunto, ſhall we find reſt and peace; and this in all our preſſures, will work us to a waiting for him.

3. The righteouſneſs of God is alſo to be conſidered in this matter. That name in the ſcripture is uſed to denote many excellencies of God, all which are reducible unto the infinite rectitude of his nature. I intend that at preſent, which is called *juſtitia regiminis*, his righteouſneſs in rule or government. This is remembred by Abraham, Gen. xviii. 25. *Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?* And by the apoſtle; *Is God unjuſt who taketh vengeance? God forbid.* This our ſouls are to own in all the works of God. They are all righteous; all his, who will do no iniquity, whoſe throne is eſtabliſhed in judgment. However they may be dreadful, grievous, and ſeem ſevere, yet they are all righteous. It is true, he will ſometimes riſe up, and do ſtrange acts, ſtrange works, Iſa. xxviii. 21. Such as he will not do often, nor ordinarily; ſuch as ſhall fill the world with dread and amazement: He will anſwer his people in terrible things; but all ſhall be in righteouſneſs. and to complain of that which is righteous, to repine againſt it, is the higheſt unrighteouſneſs that may be. Faith then fixing the ſoul on the righteouſneſs of God, is an effectual means to humble it under his mighty hand: And to help us herein we may conſider,

(1.) That God judgeth not as man judgeth. We judge by the ſeeing of the eye, and hearing of the ear according

according to outward appearances and evidences; but God ſearcheth the heart. We judge upon what is between man and man, God principally upon what is between himſelf and man. And what do we know or underſtand of theſe things, or what there is in the heart of man; what purpoſes, what contrivances, what deſigns, what corrupt affections, what ſins, what tranſactions have been toward God and them; what warnings he hath given them, what reproofs, what engagements they have made, what convictions they have had; what uſe they were putting their lives, their ſubſtance, their families unto? Alas! we know nothing of theſe things, and ſo are able to make no judgment of the proceedings of God upon them; but this we know, that he is righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works, yea the moſt terrible of them: And when the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be revealed; ah! how glorious will be his drowning of the old world, firing of Sodom, ſwallowing up Dathan and Abiram in the earth, the utter rejection of the Jews, with all other acts of his providence, ſeeming to be accompanied with ſeverity! And ſo will our own trials, inward or outward, appear to be.

(2.) God is judge of all the world, of all ages, times, places, perſons, and diſpoſeth of all, ſo as they may tend unto the good of the whole, and his own glory in the univerſe. Our thoughts are bounded, much more our obſervations and abilities to meaſure things within a very ſmall compaſs. Every thing ſtands alone unto us, whereby we may ſee little of its beauty or order; nor do we know how it ought juſtly to be diſpoſed of. That particular may ſeem deformed unto us, which when it is under his eye, who ſees all at once, paſt, preſent, and to come, with all thoſe joints and bands of wiſdom and order, whereby things are related unto one another, is beautiful and glorious: For as nothing is of itſelf, nor by itſelf, nor to itſelf, ſo nothing ſtands alone; but there is a line of mutual reſpect that runs through the creation, and every particular of it, and that in all its changes and alterations from the beginning to the

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end which gives it its lovelineſs, life, and order. He that can at one ſee but one part of a goodly ſtatue, or Coloſſus, might think it a very deformed piece; when he that views it altogether, is aſſured of its due proportion, ſymmetry, and lovelineſs. Now, all things, ages and perſons, all thus at once are objected unto the ſight of God, and he diſpoſeth them with reſpect unto the whole, that every one may fill up its own place, and ſuſtain its part and ſhare in the common tendency of all to the ſame end.

And hence it is, that in public judgments and calaties, God oftentimes ſuffers the godly to be involved with the wicked, and that not on the account of their own perſons, but as they are parts of that body which he will deſtroy. This Job expreſſeth ſomewhat harſhly; but there is truth in his aſſertion, chap. ix. 22, 23. *This is one thing, therefore I ſaid it, he deſtroyeth the righteous with the wicked. If the ſcourge ſlay ſuddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent.* God in public deſolations oftentimes takes good and bad together; a ſudden ſcourge involves them all; and this God doth for ſundry reaſons: As,

[1.] That he may manifeſt his own holineſs; which is ſuch, that he can, without the leaſt injuſtice or oppreſſion, even upon the account of their own provocations, take away the houſes, poſſeſſions, eſtates, liberties, and lives of the beſt of his own ſaints: For how ſhould a man, any man, the beſt of men, be juſt with God, if he would contend with him? No man can anſwer to him one of a thouſand, Job. ix. 31. This they will alſo own and acknowledge; upon the account of righteouſneſs, none can open his mouth about his judgments, without the higheſt impiety and wickedneſs.

[2.] He doth ſo, that his own people may learn to know his terror, and to rejoice always before him with trembling. Therefore Job affirms, that in the time of his proſperity he was not ſecure, but ſtill trembled in himſelf with the thoughts of the judgment of God. Doubtleſs much wretched carnal ſecurity would be ready to

to invade and poſſeſs the hearts of believers, if God ſhould always and conſtantly paſs them by in the diſpenſations of his public judgments.

[3.] That it may be a ſtone of offence, and a ſtumbling-block unto wicked men, who are to be hardened in their ſins, and prepared for ruin. When they ſee that all things fall alike unto all, and that thoſe who have made the ſtricteſt profeſſion of the name and fear of God, fare no better than themſelves, they are encouraged to deſpiſe the warnings of God, and the ſtrokes of his hand; and ſo to ruſh on unto the deſtruction whereunto they are prepared.

[4.] God doth it to proclaim unto all the world, that what he doth here is no final judgment, and ultimate determination concerning things and perſons. For who can ſee the wiſe man dying as the fool, the righteous and holy periſhing in their outward concernments as the ungodly and wicked; but muſt conclude, that the righteous God, the Judge of all, hath appointed another day, wherein all things muſt be called over again, and every one then receive his final reward, according as his works ſhall appear to have been. And thus are we to humble ourſelves unto the righteouſneſs wherewith the hand of God is accompanied.

[5.] His goodneſs and grace is alſo to be conſidered in all the works of mighty hands. As there is no unrighteouſneſs in him, ſo alſo all that is good and gracious; and whatever there is in any trouble of allay from the utmoſt wrath, is of mere goodneſs and grace. Thy houſes are burnt, but perhaps thy goods are ſaved. Is there no grace, no goodneſs therein? or perhaps thy ſubſtance alſo is conſumed, but yet thy perſon is alive, and ſhould a living man complain? But ſay what thou wilt, this ſtroke is not hell, which thou haſt deſerved long ago; yea, it may be a means of preventing thy going thither: So that it is accompanied with infinite goodneſs, patience and mercy alſo. And if the conſiderations hereof will quiet thy heart, take heed leſt a worſe thing befal thee.

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And theſe things amongſt others are we to conſider in God, to lead our hearts into an acquieſcing in his will, a ſubmiſſion under his mighty hand, and a patient waiting for the iſſue.

Secondly, Conſider our mean and abject condition, and that infinite diſtance wherein we ſtand from him with whom we have to do. When Abraham, the father of the faithful, and friend of God, came to treat with him about his judgments, he doth it with this acknowledgment of his condition, that he was mere duſt and aſhes, Gen. xviii. 27. A poor abject creature, that God at his pleaſure had formed out of the duſt of the earth, and which in a few days was to be reduced again into the aſhes of it. We can forget nothing more perniciouſly than what we are. *Man is a worm* (ſaith Bildad) and *the ſon of man is but a worm*, Job. xxv. 6. And therefore ſays Job himſelf, *I have ſaid to corruption, thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my mother and my ſiſter*, chap. xvii. 14. His affinity, his relation unto them is the neareſt imaginable, and he is no otherwiſe to be accounted of; and there is nothing that God abhors more, than an elation of mind in the forgetfulneſs of our mean, frail condition. *Thou ſayeſt* (ſaid he to the proud prince of Tyrus,) *That thou art a god, but* (ſaith he) *wilt thou ſay thou art a god in hands of him that ſlays thee?* Ezek. xxviii. 9. That ſevere conviction did God provide for his pride. Thou ſhalt be a man, and no God in the hand of him that ſlays thee. And when Herod prided himſelf in the acclamations of the vain multitude, (the voice of god and not of man) the angel of the Lord filled that god immediately with worms, which ſlew him and devoured him, Acts xii. 23. There is indeed nothing more effectual to abaſe the pride of the thoughts of men, than a due remembrance that they are ſo. Hence the Pſalmiſt prays, Pſal. ix. 20. *Put them in fear, O Lord, that the nations may know themſelves to be but men*, ſo, and no more, (in the Heb.) poor, miſerable, frail, mortal man, as the word ſignifies; what is man? What is his life? What is his

ſtrength? Said one, the dream of a ſhadow; a mere nothing; or as David much better, *every man living in his beſt condition is altogether vanity*, Pſal. xxxix. 5. and James, *Our life*, (which is our beſt, our all,) *is but a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away*, chap. iv. 14. But enough hath been ſpoken by many on this ſubject. And we that have ſeen ſo many thouſands each week in one city carried away to the grave, have been taught the truth of our frailty, even as with thorns and briers. But I know not how it comes to paſs, there is not any thing we are more apt to forget, than what we ourſelves are: And this puts men on innumerable miſcarages towards God and one another. Thou therefore that are exerciſed under the hand of God in any ſevere diſpenſation, and art ready on all occaſions to fill thy mouth with complaints, ſit down a little, and take a right meaſure of thyſelf, and ſee whether this frame and poſture becomes thee. It is the great God againſt whom thou repineſt, and thou art a man, and that is a name of a worm, a poor, frail, dying worm; and it may be whilſt thou art no more. And wilt thou think it meet, for ſuch a one as thou art, to magnify thyſelf againſt the great poſſeſſor of heaven and earth? Poor clay, poor duſt and aſhes, poor dying worm, know thy ſtate and condition, and fall down quietly under the mighty hand of God. Though thou wrangleſt with men about thy concernments, let God alone. The potſheards may contend with the potſheards of the earth; but wo unto him that ſtriveth with his maker

Again, conſider that in this frail condition, we have all greatly ſinned againſt God. So did Job, chap. vii. 20. *I have ſinned, what ſhall I do unto thee, O thou preſerver of men?* If this conſideration will not ſatisfy thy mind, yet it will aſſuredly ſtop the mouths of all the ſons of men. Though all the curſes of the law ſhould be executed upon us, yet every mouth muſt he ſtopped, becauſe all the world is become guilty before God, Rom. iii. 19. *And why ſhould a living man complain*, ſaith the prophet, Lam. iii. 39? Why, it may be, it

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is becauſe that his trouble is greatful and inexpreſſible, and ſuch as ſeldom or never befel any before him; but what then, ſaith he, *ſhall a man complain againſt the puniſhment of his ſins?* If this living man be a ſinful man, as there is none that liveth and ſinneth not, whatever his ſtate and condition be, he hath no ground of murmuring or complaint. For a ſinful man to complain eſpecially whilſt he is yet a living man, is moſt unreaſonable. For,

1. Whatever hath befallen us, it is juſt on the account that we are *ſinners* before God; and to repine againſt the judgments of God that are rendred evidently righteous upon the account of ſin, is to anticipate the condition of the damned in hell, a great part of whoſe miſery it is, that they always repine againſt that ſentence and puniſhment which they know to be the moſt righteous and holy. If this were now a place, if that were now my deſign to treat of the ſins of all profeſſors, how eaſy were it to ſtop the mouths of all men about their troubles; but that it is not my preſent buſineſs, I ſpeak unto particular perſons, and that not with an eſpecial deſign to convince them of their ſins, but to humble their ſouls. Another reaſon may be taken to preſs that conſideration, directly and profeſſedly alſo: At preſent let us only, when our ſouls are ready to be entangled with the thoughts of any ſevere diſpenſation of God, and our own particular preſſures, troubles, miſeries occaſioned thereby, turn into our ſelves, and take a view every one of his own perſonal provocations. And when we have done ſo, ſee what we have to ſay to God, what we have to complain of: Let the man hold his tongue, and let the ſinner ſpeak, Is not God holy, righteous, wiſe in what he hath done? And if he be, Why do we not ſubſcribe unto his ways, and ſubmit quietly unto his will?

2. But this is not all, We are not only ſuch ſinners, as to render theſe diſpenſations of God evidently holy, theſe judgments of his righteous, but alſo to manifeſt, that they are accompanied with unſpeakable patience, mercy,

mercy, and grace. To inſtance in one particular: Is it the burning of our houſes, the ſpoiling of our goods, the ruin of our eſtates, alone that our ſins have deſerved? If God had made the temporary fire on earth, to have been unto us a way of entrance into the eternal fire of hell, we had not had whereof righteouſly to complain. May we not then ſee a mixture of unſpeakable patience, grace, and mercy in every diſpenſation? And ſhall we then repine againſt it? Is it not better advice, *go and ſin no more, leſt a worſe thing befal thee;* for a ſinner out of hell, not to reſt in the will of God, not to humble himſelf under his mighty hand, is to make himſelf guilty of the eſpecial ſin of hell. Other ſins deſerve it, but repining againſt God is principally, yea only committed in it. The church comes to a bleſſed quieting reſolution in this caſe, Micah vii. 9. *I will bear the indignation of the Lord becauſe I have ſinned againſt him;* bear it quiety, patiently, and ſubmit under his hand therein.

3. Conſider that of ourſelves we are not able to make a right judgment of what is good for us, what evil unto us, or what tends moſt directly unto our chiefeſt end, Pſal. xxxix. 6. *Surely man walketh in a vain ſhew*; (in the Heb.) in an *image* full of falſe repreſentations of things; in the midſt of vain appearances, that he knows not what to chooſe, or do aright, and therefore ſpends the moſt of his time and ſtrength about things that are of no uſe or purpoſe unto him; *Surely they are diſquieted in vain.* And hereof he gives one eſpecial inſtance, *he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who ſhall gather them:* Which is but one example of the manifold fruſtrations that men meet withal in the whole courſe of their lives, as not knowing what is good for them. We all profeſs to aim at one chief and principal end, namely the enjoyment of God in Chriſt, as our eternal reward; and in order thereunto, to be carried on in the uſe of the means of faith and obedience, tending to that end. Now, if this be ſo, the ſuitableneſs, or unſuitableneſs of all other things being good or evil unto us, is to be meaſur-

measured by their tendency unto this end. And what know we hereof? As unto the things of this life, do we know, whether it will be best for us to be rich or poor, to have houses or to be harbourless, to abound or to want, to leave wealth and inheritances unto our children, or to leave them naked unto the providence of God? Do we know what state, what condition will most further our obedience, best obviate our temptations, or call most on us to mortify our corruptions? And if we know nothing at all of these things as indeed we do not, were it not best for us to leave them quietly unto God's disposal? I doubt not but it will appear, at the last day, that a world of evil in the hearts of men was stifled by the destruction of their outward concernments, more than by their inward troubles: That many were delivered from temptations by it, who otherwise would have been overtaken to their ruin, and scandal of the gospel; that many a secret impostume hath been lanced and cured by a stroke; for God doth not send judgments on his own, for judgments sake, for punishment sake, but always to accomplish some blessed design of grace towards them. And there is no one soul in particular, which shall rightly search itself, and consider state and condition, but will be able to see wisdom, grace, and care towards itself in all dispensations of God. And if I would here enter upon the benefits, that through the sanctifying hand of God, do redound unto believers by afflictions, calamities, troubles, distresses, temptations and the like effects of God's visitations, it would be of use unto the souls of men in this case. But this subject hath been so often and so well spoken unto, that I shall not insist upon it. I desire only that we would seriously consider how utterly ignorant we are of what is good for us, or useful unto us, in these outward things, and so leave them quietly unto God's disposal.

4. We may consider, that all these things about which we are troubled, fall directly within the compass of that good word of God's grace, that he will

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make all things work together for the good of them that love him, Rom. viii. 28. All things that we enjoy, all things that we are deprived of, all that we do, all that we ſuffer; our loſſes, troubles, miſeries, diſtreſſes, in which the apoſtle inſtanceth in the following verſes, they ſhall all work together for good; together with one another, and all with, and in ſubordination unto the power, grace and wiſdom of God. It may be, we ſee not how, or by what means it may be effected; but he is infinitely wiſe and powerful, who hath undertaken it, and we know little or nothing of his ways. There is nothing that we have, or enjoy, or deſire, but it hath turned unto ſome unto their hurt: Riches have been kept for men unto their hurt; wiſdom and high places have been the ruin of many; liberty and plenty are to moſt a ſnare; proſperity ſlays the fooliſh: And we are not of ourſelves, in any meaſure, able to ſecure ourſelves from the hurt and poiſon that is in any of theſe things, but that they may be our ruin alſo, as they have already been, and every day are unto multitudes of the children of men. It is enough to fill the ſoul of any man with horror and amazement, to conſider the ways, and ends of moſt of them that are entruſted with this world's goods. Is it not evident, that all their lives may ſeem induſtriouſly to take care that they may periſh eternally? Luxury, riot, oppreſſion, intemperance (and of late eſpecially) blaſphemy and atheiſm, they uſually give up themſelves unto: And this is the fruit of their abundance and ſecurity. What now, if God ſhould deprive us of all theſe things? Can any one certainly ſay, that he is worſted thereby? Might they not have turned unto his everlaſting perdition, as well as they do ſo of thouſands as good by nature, and who have had advantages to be as wiſe as we? And ſhall we complain of God's diſpenſations about them? And what ſhall we ſay, when he himſelf hath undertaken to make all things that he guides unto us to work together for our good? Anxieties of mind, and perplexities of heart about our loſſes is

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not that which we are called unto in our troubles; but this is that which is our duty: Let us consider whether we love God or no, whether we are called according to his purpose; if so, all things are well in his hand, who can order them for our good and advantage? I hope many a poor soul will from hence, under all their trouble, be able to say with him that was banished from his country, and found better entertainment elsewhere: *My friends, I had perished, if I had not perished:* Had I not been undone by fire, it may be I had been ruined in eternal fire, God hath made all to work for my good.

The end of all these discourses is to evince the reasonableness of the duty of waiting on God, which we are pressing from the psalmist. Ignorance of God and ourselves, is the great principle and cause of all our disquietments. And this ariseth mostly, not from want of light and instruction, but for want of consideration and application. The notions insisted on concerning God are obvious, and known unto all; so are these concerning ourselves; but by whom almost are they employed and improved as they ought? The frame of our spirits is as though we stood upon equal terms with God, and did think with Jonah, that we might do well to be angry with what he doth; did we rightly consider him, did we stand in awe of him as we ought, it had certainly been otherwise with us.

Influence of the promises into the soul's waiting in time of trouble.---- -The nature of them.

Having therefore laid down these considerations from the second observation taken from the words; namely, That Jehovah himself is the proper object of the soul's waiting in the condition described; I shall only add one direction, how we may be enabled to perform and discharge this duty aright, which we have manifested to have been so necessary, so reasonable, so prevalent for the obtaining of relief; and this ariseth from another

of the propoſitions laid down, for the opening of theſe verſes, not as yet ſpoken unto; namely, that

The word of promiſe is the ſoul's great ſupportment in waiting for God. So ſaith the Pſalmiſt; *In his word do I hope;* that is, the word of promiſe. As the word in general is the adequate rule of all our obedience unto God, and communion with him; ſo there are eſpecial parts of it that are ſuited unto theſe eſpecial actings of our ſouls towards him: Thus the word of promiſe, or the promiſe in the word, is that which our faith eſpecially regards, our hope, truſt and waiting on God, and it is ſuited to anſwer unto the immediate actings of our ſouls therein. From this word of promiſe therefore, that is, from theſe promiſes, doth the ſoul in its diſtreſſes take encouragement to continue waiting on God, and that on theſe two accounts.

Firſt, Becauſe they are declarative of God, his mind and his will: And, *Secondly*, becauſe they are communicative of grace and ſtrength to the ſoul, of which latter we ſhall not here treat.

Firſt, The end and uſe of the promiſe is to declare, reveal and make known God unto believers, and that in an eſpecial manner in him, and concerning him, which may give them encouragement to wait for him.

1. The promiſes are a declaration of the nature of God, eſpecially of his goodneſs, grace and love. God hath put an impreſſion of all the glorious excellencies of his nature on his word, eſpecially as he is in Chriſt, on the word of the goſpel. There, as in a glaſs, do we behold his glory in the face of Jeſus Chriſt. As his commands expreſs unto us his holineſs, his threatnings, his righteouſneſs and ſeverity; ſo do his promiſes, his goodneſs, grace, love and bounty: And in theſe things do we learn all that we truly and ſolidly know of God; that is, we know him in and by his word. The ſoul therefore, that in this condition is waiting on, or for God, conſiders the repreſentation which he makes of himſelf, and of his own nature, in and by the promiſes, and receives ſupportment and encouragement

ment in its duty. For, if God teach us by the promiſes what he is, and what he will be unto us, we have firm ground to expect from him all fruits of benignity, kindneſs and love. Let the ſoul frame in itſelf that idea of God, which is exhibited in the promiſes, and it will powerfully prevail with it to continue in an expectation of his gracious return; they all expreſſing goodneſs, love, patience, forbearance, long-ſuffering, pardoning mercy, grace, bounty, with a full ſatisfactory reward. This is the beauty of the Lord mentioned with admiration by the prophet; *How great is his goodneſs! how great is his beauty!* Zeph. ix. 17. Which is the great attractive of the ſoul to adhere conſtantly unto him. Whatever difficulties ariſe, whatever temptations interpoſe, or weariſomeneſs grows upon us in our ſtraits, troubles, trials and deſertions, let us not entertain ſuch thoughts of God, as our own perplexed imaginations may be apt to ſuggeſt unto us. This would quickly caſt us into a thouſand impatiencies, miſgivings and miſcarriages; but the remembrance of and meditation on God in his promiſes, as revealed by them, as expreſſed in them, is ſuited quite unto other ends and purpoſes. There appears, yea glorioufly ſhines forth, that love, that wiſdom, that goodneſs, tenderneſs and grace, as cannot but encourage a believing ſoul to abide in waiting for him.

2. The word of promiſe doth not only expreſs God's nature, as that wherein he propoſeth himſelf unto the contemplation of faith, but it alſo declares his will and purpoſe of acting towards the ſoul, ſuitable unto his own goodneſs and grace; for promiſes are the declarations of God's purpoſe and will, to act towards believers in Chriſt Jeſus according to the infinite goodneſs of his own nature, and this is done in great variety, according to the various conditions and wants of them that do believe. They all proceed from the ſame ſpring of infinite grace, but are branched into innumerable particular ſtreams, according as our neceſſities do require. To theſe do waiting ſouls repair for ſtay and encouragement

ment: Their perplexities principally ariſe from their miſapprehenſions of what God is in himſelf, and of what he will be unto them; and whither ſhould they repair to be undeceived, but unto that faithful repreſentation that he hath made of himſelf and his will in the word of his grace. *For no man hath ſeen God at any time, the only begotten Son, who is in the boſom of the Father, he hath revealed him*, John i. 17. Now the goſpel is nothing but the word of promiſe explained in all the ſprings, cauſes and effects of it; thither muſt we repair to be inſtructed in this matter. The imaginations and reaſonings of mens hearts will but deceive them in theſe things. The informations or inſtructions of other men may do ſo; nor have they any truth in them, further than they may be reſolved into the word of promiſe. Here alone they may find reſt and refreſhment. The ſoul of whom we ſpeak, is under troubles, perplexities and diſtreſſes as to its outward condition; preſſed with many ſtraits it may be on every hand; and as to its ſpiritual eſtate, under various apprehenſions of the mind and will of God towards it, as hath before at large been explained: In this condition it is brought in ſome meaſure unto an holy ſubmiſſion unto God, and a patient waiting for the iſſue of its trials. In this eſtate it hath many temptations to, and much working of unbelief. The whole of its oppoſition amounts to this, that it is neglected of God, that its way is hid, and his judgment is paſſed over from him, that it ſhall not be at preſent delivered, nor hereafter ſaved. What courſe can any one adviſe ſuch a one unto for his relief, and to preſerve his ſoul from fainting, or deſerting the duty of waiting on God, wherein he is engaged, but only this, to ſearch and enquire what revelation God hath made of himſelf and his will concerning him in his word: And this the promiſe declares. Here he ſhall find hope, patience, faith, expectation, to be all increaſed, comforted, encouraged. Herein lies the duty and ſafety of any in this condition. Men may bear the firſt impreſſion of any trouble with the ſtrength, courage and

and reſolution of their natural ſpirits; under ſome continuance of them, they may ſupport themſelves with former experiences, and other uſual ſprings and means of conſolation: But if their wounds prove difficult to be cured, if they deſpiſe ordinary remedies, if their diſeaſes are of long continuance, this is that which they muſt betake themſelves unto: They muſt ſearch into the word of promiſe, and learn to meaſure things not according to the preſent ſtate and apprehenſions of their mind, but according unto what God hath declared concerning them. And there are ſundry excellencies in the promiſes when hoped in, or truſted in, that tend unto the eſtabliſhment of the ſoul in this great duty of waiting. As,

(1.) That grace in them, that is, the good will of God in Chriſt, for help, relief, ſatisfaction, pardon, and ſalvation, is ſuited unto all particular conditions and wants of the ſoul. As light ariſeth from the ſun, and is diffuſed in the beams thereof to the eſpecial uſe of all creatures, enabled by a viſive faculty to make uſe of it; ſo cometh grace forth from the eternal good will of God in Chriſt, and is diffuſed by the promiſes, with a bleſſed contemperation unto the conditions and wants of all believers. There can nothing fall out between God and any ſoul, but there is grace ſuited unto it in one promiſe or another, as clearly and evidently, as if it were given unto him particularly and immediately. And this they find by experience who at any time are enabled to mix effectually a promiſe with faith.

(2.) The word of promiſe hath a wonderful, myſterious, eſpecial impreſſion of God upon it. He doth by it ſecretly and ineffably communicate himſelf unto believers. When God appeared in a dream unto Jacob, he awaked and ſaid, *God is in this place, and I knew it not.* He knew God was every where, but an intimation of his eſpecial preſence ſurprized him: So is a ſoul ſurprized, when God opens himſelf and his grace in a promiſe unto him. It cries out, God is here, and I knew

knew it not. Such a near approach of God in his grace it finds, as is accompanied with a refreshing surprisal.

(3.) There is an especial engagement of the veracity and truth of God in every promise. Grace and truth are the two ingredients of an evangelical promise; the matter and form whereof they do consist. I cannot now stay to shew wherein this especial engagement of truth in the promise doth consist. Besides, it is a thing known and confessed; but it hath an especial influence to support the soul when hoped in, in its duty of waiting: For that hope can never make ashamed, or leave the soul unto disappointments, which stays itself on divine veracity under a special engagement.

And this is that duty which the Psalmist engageth himself in, and unto the performance of, as the only way to obtain a comfortable interest in that forgiveness which is with God, and all the gracious effects thereof. And in the handling hereof, as we have declared its nature and necessity; so we have the Psalmist's directions for its practice unto persons in the like condition with him, for the attaining of the end by him aimed at, so that it needs no further application. That which remains of the Psalm is the *address* which he makes unto others, with the encouragement which he gives them to steer the same course with himself; and this he doth in the two last verses, which, to compleat the exposition of the whole Psalm, I shall briefly explain and pass through, as having already dispatched what I principally aimed at.

VERSES VII, VIII.

VER. 7. *Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.*

VER. 8. *And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*

I SHALL proceed in the opening of these words, according unto the method already insisted on. I. The

The meaning of the principal words ſhall be declared; II. Then the ſenſe and importance of the whole. III. The relation that they have unto the condition of the ſoul expreſſed in the Pſalm muſt be manifeſted; From all which, obſervations will ariſe for our inſtruction and directions in the like caſes, wherein we are or may be concerned.

Let Iſrael hope in the Lord; (in the Heb.) *Hope Iſrael in* JEHOVAH. Truſt, or expect; the ſame word with that, ver. 5. In his word do I hope; properly to expect, to look for, which includes hope, and adds ſome further degree of the ſoul's acting towards God; it is an earneſt looking after the thing hoped for; *expecta ad dominum;* hope in him, and look up to him; *For with the Lord, quia* or *quoniam*, becauſe, ſeeing that with the Lord; (in the Heb.) mercy; the verb ſubſtantive, as uſual, is omitted, which we ſupply, *there is mercy*, grace, bounty, goodneſs, good-will. This word is often joined with another, diſcovering its importance, and that is, (Heb.) *truth*, (in the Heb.) goodneſs, or mercy and truth. Theſe are, as it were, conſtituent parts of God's promiſes. It is of goodneſs, grace, bounty, to promiſe any undue mercy. And it is of truth or faithfulneſs to make good what is ſo promiſed. The LXX, commonly render this word by ἔλεος, that is, pardoning mercy, as it is every where uſed in the New Teſtament.

And with him is plenteous redemption; (Heb.) *with him;* as before ſpeaking unto God, verſe 4. (Heb.) *with thee* there is; the meaning of which expreſſion hath been opened at large. Redemption (in the Heb.) it ſignifies, to redeem; the ſame with λύτρωσις, ἀπολύτρωσις, redemption: This word is often uſed for a proper redemption, ſuch as is made by the intervention of a price, and not a mere aſſertion unto liberty by power, which is ſometimes alſo called redemption. Thus it is ſaid of the money that the firſt-born of the children of Iſrael, which were above the number of Levites, were redeemed with; that Moſes took (in the Heb.) the redempti-

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on, that is, the redemption money, the price of their redemption, Numb. iii. 49. And Pſal. xlix. 8. The redemption of mens ſouls is precious; it coſt a great price. The redemption then, that is with God, relates unto a price; goodneſs or mercy that is with reſpect unto a price becomes redemption, actively the cauſe or means of it. What that price is, ſee Matt. xx. 20. 1 Pet. i. 18.

Plenteous redemption, (in the Heb.) *multa, copioſa,* much, abundant, plenteous. It is uſed both for quantity and quality; much in quantity, or plenteous, abundant; and in quality, that is, precious, excellent And it is applied in a good and bad ſenſe; ſo it is ſaid of our ſins, Ezek. ix. 6. our ſins (Heb.) are increaſed or multiplied, or are great; many in number, and heinous in their nature or quality. And in the other ſenſe, it is applied unto the mercy of God, whereby they are removed; it is great or plenteous, it is excellent or precious.

Verſe 8. *And he,* that is the Lord Jehovah; he with whom is plenteous redemption (in the Heb.) ſhall redeem; or make them partakers of that redemption that is with him. *He ſhall redeem Iſrael,* that is, thoſe who hope and truſt in him.

From all his iniquities (in the Heb.) *his iniquities,* that is, of the elect Iſrael, and every individual amongſt them. But the word ſignifies trouble as well as ſin, eſpecially that trouble or puniſhment that is for ſin. So Cain expreſſeth himſelf upon the denunciation of his ſentence; (in the Heb.) my ſin, that is, the puniſhment thou haſt denounced againſt my ſin, is too great or heavy for me to bear, Gen. iv. 13. There is a near affinity between ſin and trouble; *noxam pœna ſequitur,* puniſhment is inſeparable from iniquity. Then the word here uſed ſignifies, either ſin with reference unto trouble due to it, or trouble with reſpect unto ſin whence it proceeds. And both may here be well intended. God ſhall redeem Iſrael from all his ſins, and troubles that have enſued thereon. And this is the ſignification of the words; which indeed are plain and obvious.

And

And theſe words cloſe up the Pſalm. He who began with depths, his own depths of ſin and trouble, out of which, and about which he cried out unto God, is ſo encouraged by that proſpect of grace and forgiveneſs with God, which by faith he had obtained, as to preach unto others, and to ſupport them in expectation of deliverance from all their ſin and trouble alſo.

And ſuch for the moſt part are all the exerciſes and trials of the children of God. Their entrance may be a ſtorm, but their cloſe is a calm. Their beginning is oftentimes trouble, but their latter end is peace; peace to themſelves, and advantage to the church of God. For men in all ages coming out of their great trials of their own, have been the moſt inſtrumental for the good of others. For God doth not greatly exerciſe any of his, but with ſome eſpecial end for his own glory.

II. The ſenſe and intendment of the Pſalmiſt in theſe words is to be conſidered, and that reſolves itſelf into three general parts.

Firſt, An exhortation or admonition. *Iſrael hope in the Lord, or expect Jehovah.*

Secondly, A ground of encouragement unto the performance of the duty exhorted unto; *becauſe with the Lord there is much, plenteous, abundant, precious redemption.*

Thirdly, A gracious promiſe of a bleſſed iſſue which ſhall be given unto performance of this duty. *He ſhall redeem Iſrael from all his ſins, and out of all his troubles.*

In the exhortation there occurs,

(1.) The perſons exhorted; that is, Iſrael; not Iſrael according to the fleſh; for they are *not all Iſrael which are of Iſrael*, Rom. ix. 6. But it is the Iſrael mentioned, Pſal. lxxiii. 1. The whole Iſrael of God to whom he is good, ſuch as are of a clean heart; that is, all thoſe who are intereſted in the covenant, and do inherit the promiſe of their forefathers, who was firſt called by that name? All believers, and the Pſalmiſt treats them all in general in this matter.

1*ſt*, Becauſe there is none of them but have their trials and intanglements about ſin, more or leſs. As there is none that liveth and ſinneth not; ſo there is none that ſinneth, and is not intangled and troubled Perhaps then they are not all of them in the ſame condition with him, in the depths that he was plunged into. Yet more or leſs, all and every one of them is ſo far concerned in ſin, as to need his direction. All the ſaints of God either have been, or are, or may be in theſe depths. It is a good ſaying of Auſtin on this place, *Valde ſunt in profundo qui non clamant de profundo.* None ſo in the deep as they who do not cry and call out of the deep. They are in a deep of ſecurity, who are never ſenſible of a deep of ſin.

2*dly*, There is none of them, whatever their preſent condition be, but they may fall into the like depths with thoſe of the Pſalmiſt. There is nothing abſolutely in the covenant, nor in any promiſe, to ſecure them from it. And what befalleth any one believer, may befal them all. If any one believer may fall totally away all may do ſo, and not leave one in the world, and ſo an end be put to the kingdom of Chriſt, which is no ſmall evidence that they cannot ſo fall. But they may fall into depths of ſin; that ſome of them have done ſo, we have teſtimonies and inſtances beyond exception. It is good then, that all of them ſhould be prepared for that duty which they may all ſtand in need of, and a right diſcharge of it. Beſides, the duty mentioned is not abſolutely reſtrained to the condition before deſcribed; But it it proper and accomodate unto other ſeaſons alſo. Therefore are all the Iſrael of God exhorted unto it.

(2.) The duty itſelf, is hoping in Jehovah, with ſuch an hope or truſt, as hath an expectation of relief joined with it And there are two things included in this duty:

1. The renunciation of any hopes, in expectation of deliverance either from ſin or trouble, any other way; hope in Jehovah; this is frequently expreſſed, where the performance of this duty is mentioned: ſee Hoſea xiv. 3.

xiv. 3, Jer. iii. 22, 23. And we have declared the nature of it, in the expoſition of the 1ſt and 2d verſes.

2. Expectation from him; and this alſo hath been inſiſted on in the obſervations from the verſes immediately preceeding, wherein alſo the whole nature of this duty was explained, and directions were given for the due performance of it.

Secondly, The encouragement tendred unto this duty, is the next thing in the words; for *with the Lord is plenteous redemption:* Wherein we may obſerve,

(1.) What it is that he profeſſeth as the great encouragement unto the duty mentioned, and that is redemption; the redemption that is with God; upon the matter the ſame with the forgiveneſs before-mentioned; Mercy, pardon, benignity, bounty. He doth not bid them hope in the Lord, becauſe they were the ſeed of Abraham, the peculiar people of God, made partakers of privileges above all the people in the world: much leſs becauſe of their worthineſs, or that good that was in themſelves, but merely upon the account of mercy in God; of his grace, goodneſs, and bounty. The mercy of God, and the redemption that is with him, is the only ground unto ſinners for hope and confidence in him.

(2.) There are two great concernments of this grace, the one expreſſed, the other implied in the words. The *1ſt* is, that it is much, plenteous, abundant. That which principally diſcourageth diſtreſſed ſouls from a comfortable waiting on God, is their fears leſt they ſhould not obtain mercy from him, and that becauſe their ſins are ſo great, and ſo many; or attended with ſuch circumſtances and aggravations, as that it is impoſſible they ſhould find acceptance with God. This ground of deſpondency and unbelief the Pſalmiſt obviates, by repreſenting the fulneſs, the plenty, the boundleſs plenty, of the mercy that is with God. It is ſuch as will ſuit the condition of the greateſt ſinners in their greateſt depths; the ſtores of its treaſures are inexhauſtible. And the force of the exhortation doth not ly ſo much in this, that there is redemption with God, as that this re-

demption is plenteous or abundant. *2dly*, Here is an intimation in the word itſelf of that relation which the goodneſs and grace of God propoſed hath to the blood of Chriſt; whence it is called redemption. This as was ſhewed in the opening of the words, hath reſpect unto a price; the price whereby we are bought, that is the blood of Chriſt. This is that whereby way is made for the exerciſe of mercy towards ſinners; redemption which properly denotes actual deliverance, is ſaid to be with God, or in him, as the effect in the cauſe. The cauſes of it are his own grace and the blood of Chriſt. There are theſe prepared for the redeeming of believers from ſin and trouble, unto his own glory. And herein lieth the encouragement that the Pſalmiſt propoſeth unto the performance of the duty exhorted unto; namely, to wait on God. It is taken from God himſelf, as all encouragements unto ſinners to draw nigh unto him, and to wait for him, muſt be. Nothing but himſelf can give us confidence to go unto him. And it is ſuited unto the ſtate and condition of the ſoul under conſideration. Redemption and mercy are ſuited to give relief from ſin and miſery.

Thirdly, The laſt verſe contains a promiſe of the iſſue of the performance of this duty; *He ſhall redeem his people from all their iniquities*. Two things are obſervable in the words.

1. The certainty of the iſſue; or event of the duty mentioned (in the Heb.) *and he ſhall*, or *he will redeem*; he will aſſuredly do ſo. Now, although this in the Pſalmiſt is given out by revelation, and is a new promiſe of God; yet, as it relates to the condition of the ſoul here expreſſed, and the diſcovery made by faith of forgiveneſs and redemption with God, the certainty intended in this aſſertion is built upon the principles laid down. Whence therefore doth it appear, whence may we infallibly conclude, that *God will redeem his Iſrael from all their iniquities?* I anſwer.

(1.) The concluſion is drawn from the nature of God. There is forgiveneſs and redemption with him, and he will

will act towards his people ſuitably to his own nature. There is redemption with him, and therefore he will redeem; forgiveneſs with him, and therefore he will forgive. As the concluſion is certain and infallible, that wicked men, ungodly men, ſhall be deſtroyed, becauſe God is righteous and holy; his righteouſneſs and holineſs indiſpenſibly requiring their deſtruction; ſo is the redemption and ſalvation of all that believe, certain on this account; namely, becauſe there is forgiveneſs with him; he is good and gracious, and ready to forgive; his goodneſs and grace requires their ſalvation.

(2.) The concluſion is certain upon the account of God's faithfulneſs in his promiſes. He hath promiſed, that thoſe who wait on him ſhall not be aſhamed; that their expectation ſhall not be diſappointed; whence the concluſion is certain, that in his time and way they ſhall be redeemed.

2. There is the extent of this deliverance or redemption; ſhall redeem *Iſrael from all their iniquities.* It was ſhewed in the opening of the verſe, that this word denotes either ſin-procuring trouble, or trouble procured by ſin; and there is a reſpect unto both ſin and its puniſhment: From both, from all of both kinds, God will redeem his Iſrael. Not this or that evil; this or that ſin, but from all evil, all ſin: He will take all ſins from their ſouls, and weep all tears from their eyes. Now, God is ſaid to do this on many accounts.

1. On the account of the great cauſe of all actual deliverance and redemption, the blood of Chriſt. He hath laid an aſſured foundation of the whole work; the price of redemption is paid, and they ſhall in due time enjoy the effects and fruits of it.

2. Of the actual communication of the effects of that redemption unto them. This is ſure to all the elect of God, to his whole Iſrael. They ſhall all be made partakers of them. And this is the end of all the promiſes of God, and of the grace and mercy promiſed in them, namely, that they ſhould be means to exhibit and give out to believers that redemption which is

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purchaſed and prepared for them; and this is done two ways.

1. Partially, initially, and gradually in this life. Here God gives in unto them the pardon of their ſins, being juſtified freely by his grace; and in this ſanctification of them through his Spirit, gives them delivery from the power and dominion of ſin. Many troubles alſo he delivers them from, and from all as far as they are penal, or have any mixture of the curſe in them.

2. Compleatly; namely, when he ſhall have freed them from ſin and trouble, and from all the effects and conſequents of them, by bringing them unto the enjoyment of himſelf in glory.

3. The words being thus opened, we may briefly in the next place, conſider what they expreſs, concerning the ſtate, condition, or actings of the ſoul, which are repreſented in this pſalm.

Having himſelf attained unto the ſtate before deſcribed, and being engaged reſolvedly into the performance of that duty which would aſſuredly bring him into haven of full reſt and peace; the pſalmiſt applies himſelf unto the reſidue of the Iſrael of God, to give them encouragement unto this duty with himſelf, from the experience that he had of a bleſſed ſucceſs therein. As if he had ſaid unto them; "Ye are now in afflictions, "and under troubles, and that upon the account of "your ſins and provocations: A condition I confeſs ſad "and deplorable: but yet there is hope in Iſrael con-"cerning theſe things. For conſider how it hath been "with me, and how the Lord hath dealt with me. I "was in depths inexpreſſible, and ſaw for a while no "way or means of delivery: But God hath been pleaſ-"ed graciouſly to reveal himſelf unto me, as a God "pardoning iniquity, tranſgreſſion, and ſin; and in the "conſolation, and ſupportment which I have received "thereby; I am waiting for a full participation of the "fruits of his love. Let me therefore prevail with you, "who are in the like condition, to ſteer the ſame courſe "with me. Only let your expectations to be fixed in

"mercy

" mercy and ſovereign grace, without any regard unto " any privilege or worth in yourſelves. Reſt in plente- " ous redemption, thoſe ſtores of grace which are with " Jehovah, and according to his faithfulneſs in his pro- " miſes, he will deliver you out all perplexing troubles."

Having thus opened the words, I ſhall now only name the doctrinal obſervations that are tendred from them, and ſo put a cloſe to theſe diſcourſes. As,

Obſerv. 1. The Lord JEHOVAH is the only hope for ſin-diſtreſſed ſouls; *Hope in the Lord:* This hath been ſufficiently diſcovered and confirmed on ſundry paſſages in the pſalm.

Obſerv. 2. The ground of all hope and expectation of relief in ſinners, is mere grace, mercy, and redemption. *Hope in the Lord, for with him there is redemption.* All other grounds of hope are falſe and deceiving.

Obſerv. 3. Inexhauſtible ſtores of mercy and redemption are needful for the encouragement of ſinners to reſt and wait on God. With him is plentiful redemption. Such is your miſery, ſo preſſing are your fears and diſconſolations, that nothing leſs than boundleſs grace, can relieve or ſupport you; there are therefore ſuch treaſures and ſtores in God as are ſuited hereunto. *With him is plenteous redemption.*

Obſerv. 4. The ground of all the diſpenſation of mercy, goodneſs, grace, and forgiveneſs which is in God to ſinners, is laid in the blood of Chriſt. Hence it is here called redemption. Unto this alſo we have ſpoken at large before.

Obſerv. 5. All that wait on God, on the account of mercy and grace, ſhall have an undoubted iſſue of peace. *He ſhall redeem Iſrael;* let him, ſaith God, lay hold of my arm, that he may have peace, and he ſhall have peace, Iſa. xxvii. 3.

Obſerv. 6. Mercy given to them that wait on God ſhall in the cloſe and iſſue, be every way full and ſatisfying. *He ſhall redeem his people from all their iniquities.*

And theſe propoſitions do ariſe from the words, as abſolutely conſidered, and in themſelves. If we mind their relation unto the peculiar condition of the ſoul repreſented

preſented in this pſalm, they will yet afford us the enſuing obſervations.

Obſerv. 1. They who out of depths have by faith and waiting obtained mercy, or are ſupported in waiting for a ſenſe of believed mercy and forgiveneſs, are fitted, and only they are fitted, to preach and declare grace and mercy unto others.

This was the caſe with the Pſalmiſt. Upon his emerging out of his own depths and ſtraits, he declares the mercy and redemption whereby he was delivered, unto the whole Iſrael of God.

Obſerv. 2. A ſaving participation of grace and forgiveneſs leaves a deep impreſſion of its fulneſs and excellency on the ſoul of a ſinner; ſo was it here with the pſalmiſt. Having himſelf obtained forgiveneſs, he knows no bounds or meaſure, as it were, in the extolling of it. There is with God mercy, redemption, plenteous redemption, redeeming from all iniquity; I have found it ſo, and ſo will every one do that ſhall believe it.

Now theſe obſervations might all of them, eſpecially the two laſt, receive an uſeful improvement. But whereas what I principally intended from this pſalm, hath been at large inſiſted on, upon the firſt verſes of it, I ſhall not here further draw forth any meditations upon them, but content myſelf with the expoſition that hath been given of the deſign of the pſalmiſt, and ſenſe of his words in theſe laſt verſes.

F I N I S.